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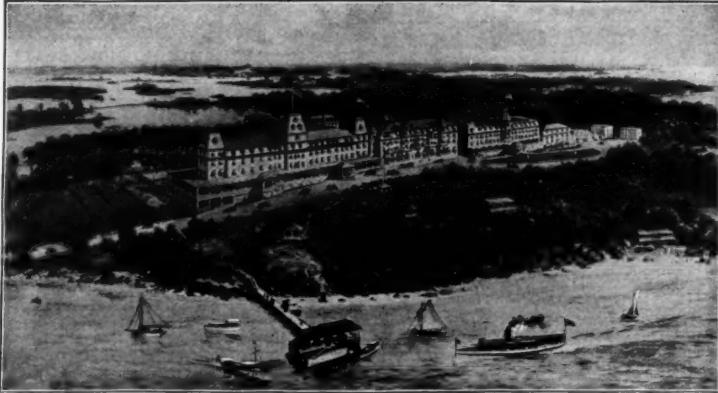
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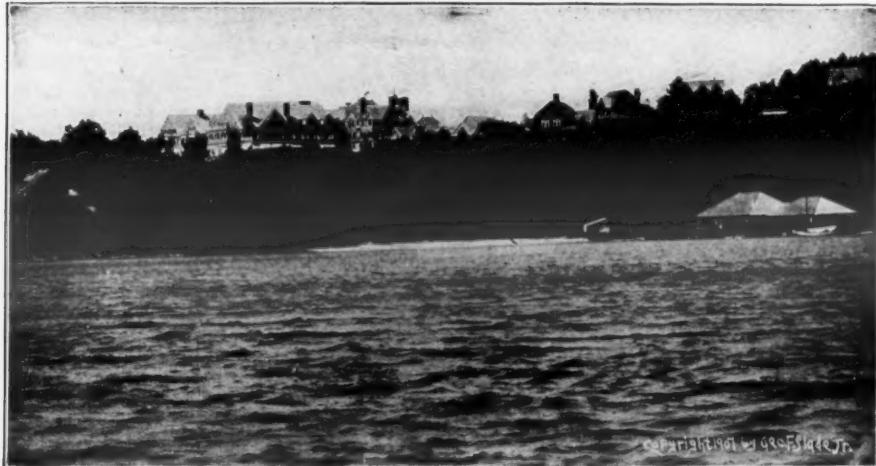
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JUNE, 1916

No. 5

AINSLEE'S

The Magazine That Entertains

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VALESKA SURATT'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE TO

Readers of Ainslee's Magazine

Revealing Secrets That Have Made Her One of the Most Beautiful of Screen Actresses

By VALESKA SURATT

GETTING down to "brass tacks" is mighty good business—sometimes.

Remember when father used to use that brass-tack tone of voice, and we wondered if he knew just how bad our school report was or if mother had told him how long we sat out on the porch last night with Jack? The same "jumpy" feeling came in our throats a few years later, when hubby got down to brass tacks about that bill for the new spring bonnet.

Now don't get scared, girls, I'm not going to scold you for your school reports, for holding hands, or for not being able to resist that peachy spring bonnet.

Not I, because I plead guilty on all those counts myself. But I am going to get down to brass tacks about your personal appearance. By personal appearance I don't mean whether you should wear a short skirt and high shoes or whether you should wear the new hoop skirt and low shoes. That's up to your individual taste. What I do want to do is have a real serious, chummy talk with you about the care of your hair—your complexion—your facial appearance in general.

I want to impress upon you that to neglect your appearance is about the most foolish thing you can do, because such neglect will some day make you very unhappy. I want you to try my formulas that I know, from personal experience, are truly and remarkably effective. They are easy to prepare, and the cost is so reasonable that you cannot afford to miss the opportunity.

I had a great many failures before I struck the right thing. Whether you are satisfied with what you are using now or not, just try one of these formulas, and I am sure you will agree with me that they surpass anything you have ever used. The simple ingredients for making up these formulas can be

obtained at drug stores and many department stores.

Try these first, and if you cannot obtain them easily, write to my secretary in Chicago, whose address you will find later on, and you will be supplied quickly, by return mail, at the same cost which you would have to pay the druggist.

Now let's get down to the brass tacks. Suppose we start with the hair. Making the hair grow was a great problem to me. Thick bunches of hair would come out on my comb. I really feared baldness. Finally I came to the inevitable conclusion that the hair must have nourishment instead of mere stimulation to keep it in good condition. With this proper nourishment, it is remarkable indeed what results may be accomplished in hair growth. I have known cases where, as a result, hair would stop falling after a certain formula of mine had been used only a few days. There were no more thick strands of hair coming out and entangling itself on the comb.

I believe I could make a great real of money with this formula by putting it up in form ready to use, and selling it, but I am content to give it here for the lasting benefit of all womankind. If you will be faithful in its use, and, above all, use it liberally, I know you will be mighty glad you read this little chat.

In making up this formula yourself at home in a few moments, you have over a pint of this unexcelled hair tonic. This would cost about two dollars at the stores, so you see how economical this formula is to you—and it gives real results, besides. Simply mix half a pint of alcohol with the



VALESKA SURATT
She has her own ideas about
Beauty Making that have
made her famous

same amount of water, or, if you prefer, use a pint of bay rum and add one ounce of beta quinol. The beta quinol will cost you fifty cents at any drug store. In applying this, simply pour a little in a small glass or eyecup, and then dip a toothbrush into the tonic and apply to the scalp, rubbing freely. The toothbrush should be used for no other purpose, of course—or any small brush will do. In this way it will take you but a couple of minutes to go over the scalp thoroughly. Do this every day.

Now, there's another important point about hair health. This is a cleanly scalp. When oily accumulations and scurf form on the scalp, as they always do, the vigor of hair roots is affected. Soap and brush will not completely dissolve these accumulations. Here is a suggestion: Dissolve a teaspoonful of eggol in a cup of hot water. Apply to the hair for a head wash. Use like any ordinary shampoo.

You will be astonished how wonderfully clean the hair and scalp will be, every particle of scurf and dirt eliminated from the smallest pores. This allows the hair tonic given above to produce its results more quickly and decisively. At the drug store you can get enough eggol for twenty-five cents to give you a dozen delightful shampoos.

As for wrinkles—I used to look upon them much as the drying of an apple skin foretells the passing of youth that can never return. Since I have worked out for myself the problem of ridding myself of these check marks of nature's bookkeeper, I have changed my mind. I think there is no excuse nowadays for the presence of wrinkles. Results from the use of my wrinkle formula have proven this to be true.

I want every girl and woman who reads AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE to try this formula: Into a bowl pour half a pint of hot water. Add slowly two ounces of eptol and stir constantly until it begins to cream. Remove from the fire and add a tablespoonful of glycerin, stirring until cold. This will give you a large quantity of fine, white, satiny cream. Use it freely and your face will resume the freshness and vigor of youth. Enough eptol to make the above formula will cost you only fifty cents at any first-class drug or department store. Lines of age, crow's feet, the flabbiness of the flesh, all will be replaced by a plump fullness. I mean it will absolutely do this very thing if you are faithful, and, above all, liberal in its use.

Now for the complexion. This was another hard nut to crack, because everything I had previously used seemed to take an age to produce even the slightest result. Finally I hit upon a formula which I prize among my greatest—it is indeed a jewel. This must be used very liberally and every day—twice a day, if possible. You will find it economical enough to do this, and you will succeed. Besides, it is very simple to make, and takes but a few moments. Here it is: Bring a pint of water to the boiling point. Add slowly one ounce of zintone, and stir until all is dissolved. Then add two tablespoonfuls of glycerin. Fifty cents' worth of zintone will make a pint of this excellent beauty cream.

There is no reason for having a sallow, muddy, spotty complexion. This gives a most adorable purity to the complexion, your mirror will make you happy, and you will realize I have given you something really worth while.

To remove blackheads, big and little, get some powdered neroxin from your druggist for about

fifty cents. Sprinkle a little on a hot, wet sponge, and rub briskly for a minute or two over the blackheads. You will be surprised how they will disappear in a few minutes. It is injurious to the skin to try to pick out or sweat out blackheads. Sweating makes the pores large. The method I suggest is entirely unique, and works in a few moments.

There is nothing that will remove superfluous hair so magically and so perfectly as sulfo solution. It simply dissolves the hair instead of burning it off like pastes and powders, and will not redden, irritate, or injure the skin. It can be used on the tenderest parts of the body. It removes all the superfluous hairs perfectly, whether heavy or bristly, and leaves the skin soft and smooth. No one can tell you have used a depilatory. You can secure sulfo solution for one dollar from your druggist. There is nothing else that will actually dissolve hair away. This will, and it is safe.

I have tried a great many kinds of face powder, and with poor satisfaction. I finally worked out one of my own, that is now sold by most department and drug stores and known as the Valeska Suratt Face Powder, at fifty cents for an extra-large box in flesh, white, or brunette. You will notice the extraordinary fineness of this powder. It is unlike nearly all others I have ever used, being entirely free from chalkiness and being "invisible" when applied. It gives, for this reason, a charm to the skin almost impossible to produce by any other face powder I know.

In closing, I want to call your attention to the coupon below, which I asked to be added to this article, because if no drug store is convenient, or if your druggist happens not to have the articles you want on hand, it will be easier for you to send the coupon instead of writing a letter. I have arranged to have a supply of each of the necessary articles on hand to supply those who cannot reach a drug or department store to get them. Simply cut out the coupon below, fill in with your name and address, indicate what articles you want, inclose the price, and mail it to "Secretary to Valeska Suratt, 392 Thompson Bldg., Chicago, Ill."

Last, but not least, I want to give you an unusual opportunity to get a new and extraordinary perfume. It happens to be named after me, but I think it is worthy of my friends, so delicate, so lasting, so new and uniquely fascinating in scent, "Valeska Suratt Perfume." If you will send only fifty cents to the address given here, a full-size \$1.00 bottle of this surpassing perfume will be sent you at once.

I feel now I have done my part in aiding thousands of my sisters in attaining the charms they all have a right to have, a skin adorable, queenly hair, and an unspeakable atmosphere of elegance and sweetness. Always yours,

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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXXVII

JUNE, 1916.

No. 5.

The Woman Without a Past



THE trouble began on a keen night in March. Langstaff let himself into his home with his latchkey, threw off his overcoat, and glanced resentfully at the hall clock, which greeted him with two soft bell tones. He was weary and disgusted. He had just sewed up Mrs. Emilie Porozzi's head for the second time in six weeks, both visits having been consequent upon differences of opinion between Emilie and her Nicolo. He dearly wanted to report Nicolo's doings to the police, but the six months of his sojourn in Newtonport Mills had effectively taught him to let the foreign population and their highly colored affairs alone.

Young, handsome, boyishly fond of gayety and excitement, and blessed with an income that made him independent of his profession, Blair Langstaff was the last man on earth for the position of company physician of the Benton Mills. He had taken the position on the advice of his guardian, Bowles Clayton, one of the partners in the concern, who had decided that his young cousin's overpolish needed scratching on hardpan.

"A year in that swarm will take the nonsense out of you, young man,"

By Ethel Watts Mumford

Author of "The Quetzal," "The Will and the Deed," etc.

Clayton had said. "You'll learn more human nature and practical healing in that sink of iniquity than you ever will hanging around a city office waiting for patients. Go to it and forget that you don't have to make your living."

Langstaff had taken the older man's advice, and was finding the experience chastening in the highest degree. He hated the reek of soft coal; he hated the dullness of the little New England mill town; his gorge rose at the squalid, criminal hive of "the Colony," the hill on the right bank of the river which had been appropriated and densely settled by the swarming foreign population. He loathed even the little yellow frame house that displayed his doorplate. It stood between the Colony and its more respectable neighbor, Old Newtonport, its tiny lawn separated from the pavement by a damaged privet hedge whose very odor was an offense in its owner's nostrils. Behind it lurked a portable garage, so small that it looked as if the doctor's car could get into it only by force. The automobile alone indicated Langstaff's independent income. It was a first-class touring car, high powered and well equipped.

Wearily and perseveringly Langstaff

had plowed through month after month of hard work. Clayton had predicted that he wouldn't "have the grit to stick it out," so stick it out he must. But to-night the sordidness and monotony of the life he had been living for the last six months seemed unendurable.

Swearing gently under his breath, he switched on the electric light in the pantry and investigated the ice box, to see what his housekeeper had had the grace to leave there. A moment later he was seated in his leather armchair—relic of his Harvard days—before a spread of cheese and chicken, beer, and the hitherto unperused Sunday paper; it was Tuesday.

The New York papers! How, in his exile, he looked forward to their perusal! They were the one relief from the sordid tasks of his practice. In those highly colored pages he could read of events, and forget the stitches in Emilie's none-too-clean scalp. All Europe embattled was a thrill with horrors; Mexico cutting her own throat presented a spectacle of tragedy to which distance lent glamour; the flaming Orient opened a door of romance; even New York, with burning subways, Belgian-relief entertainments, and perfervid divorce suits, offered a field of interest. Blair scanned the headlines:

"Elopement of Pickle Heiress"; "Explosion in Moving-picture Show"; "Two Cruisers Torpedoed"; "Dancer Breaks Her Toe"; "Young Singer Disappears"; "General Villa Reported Married. Unconfirmed Report that the Mexican Leader was Married in San Luneto to Signora Monte, Granddaughter of General Santa Ana." Blair grinned. "That at least was a new one on the bandit chief."

Miss Kathleen Cosway, pupil of Angelotte, whose operatic débüt was the season's musical sensation, has disappeared from Rome. Letters announcing her intention to return to America were received early in January, but no word has come from her since and

nothing can be learned of her whereabouts. It is conjectured that she may have sailed from Genoa. The consuls have been notified to make every effort—

Blair shrugged wisely; a press agent had hit on a brand-new "gag".

Lydia Kikovitchka fell upon the stage of the Century Opera House, dislocating her left great toe, which is insured for seventy-five thousand dollars. The insurance companies have called their own doctor in consultation.

Langstaff threw down the disappointing sheet; the news was, after all, rather tame. Yet compared with a day's happenings in Newtonport Mills!

For the thousandth time, he made up his mind to chuck the job; for the thousandth time, he told himself that he had been a fool to follow his guardian's advice. If only Clayton hadn't seen fit to go off on a prolonged vacation and leave the works in charge of Bouton, his partner, things might have been less appallingly dull. But Bouton disliked young Doctor Langstaff, and the doctor disliked Bouton. Bouton considered Langstaff a cub and a trouble maker, for the doctor had precipitated a strike among the Italian hands in retaliation for a complaint lodged against the principal padrone of the Colony, Salviotti, because of his too free use of the stiletto. Bouton had explained in no uncertain terms that he did not intend to have his labor purveyors interfered with in the use of the stiletto or anything else. If the dagos murdered only one another, it was not a white man's business.

Langstaff had been properly taught his place, and had acquired a pessimistic conviction that crime in the Colony was a necessity with which it was hopeless to interfere. As for romance and adventure, they were myths, and chivalry a dream. The only way to live was to close one's eyes to everything except making good. Yet even as Langstaff ate his crackers and cheese and drank his prosaic beer and growled

at the paucity of yellow news, adventure and romance were hurrying toward him.

He sighed as he drained his glass, turned off the lights, entered the narrow hall, and glanced at the clock—thereby learning that it was now two-thirty a. m. He stretched his hand to the switch and paused. Something had fallen heavily against his door. There was a queer, smothered, inarticulate sound outside. Langstaff slipped the bolt. He was not unused to these hurry callers and expected to see a gesticulating, breathless foreigner. Instead, the glare of the drop-light illuminated the strangest vision he had ever seen—a girl in a shroud, a girl with eyes as blue as sapphires, with long braids of red hair. Even in that moment of surprise, he mentally noted that they were of an impossible red. Those two great plaits that framed her face and hung below her waist were dyed.

She flung out hands as transparent and bloodless as alabaster.

"I want the doctor," she whispered.

"The doctor? Come in," said Langstaff. He drew her in and closed the door.

In the clear overhead light, the face of his visitor showed so thin and drawn that it matched the pale, powerless hands and the grim garment that covered her. Langstaff's amazement held him speechless. Then her helplessness called to him. He led her into the consulting room, turned on the light, and eased her gently into the capacious chair. She sank into it with shuddering completeness. She was shivering with cold, her feet were bare, and the hem of her robe was stained with earth and blood.

"What can I do for you?" he said mechanically.

"Hide me," she answered.

"Insane," thought Langstaff.

He found his brandy flask and

quickly forced a drink between her stiffened lips. He lit the gas log, threw his overcoat about her, and eagerly watched the faint color flow to her face and the slow relaxation of her shivering limbs.

"Now," he said, "that's better. Don't be afraid. I'll hide you, if it's necessary. But I must know everything if I'm to help you."

He stared at her. What a bitter shame it was that a creature of such beauty should be demented! She looked at him with questioning, terrified eyes, and he noted the gray shadows that ringed them, and the gaunt tightness of the skin about her lovely mouth.

"You look starved," he added. "I think you'd better eat a little something. Try a bit of this chicken."

She took it eagerly and ate ravenously, her eyes turning hungrily to the plate.

"Not too much all at once," he said gently, placing temptation beyond her reach. "I'll get you a glass of milk presently. Now, tell me, who are you, and what are you doing in Newtonport Mills? You don't come from here, I'm sure."

"Newtonport Mills?" she repeated. "I didn't know where I was."

She was even worse than he had feared, poor child!

"Your friends," he persisted, "your relatives—who are they?"

Her lips trembled. Two great tears filmed her eyes and rolled down her wan cheeks.

"I'll—I'll have to tell you all, I know," she said. "To begin with, the one thing I am *sure* of is my hair. It was *not* like that."

"It's very beautiful hair," he observed soothingly. "What's wrong with it?"

"It wasn't that color before—I know it wasn't. It was brown, I think. It was one of the first things I noticed

when I woke up—my hair. I couldn't realize it was mine at first."

He fingered one of the heavy braids. Color and texture showed that it had been bleached and then henna colored.

"Why," he wondered, "take such trouble with a lunatic's hair? It would have been more like an attendant to cut it short and avoid the care of that tangled mane."

"It's been dyed," he said aloud. "I can see that. Tell me, if you can, why are you dressed in a"—he caught himself—"in this sort of a dress?"

"It's what I had on," she answered. "Oh, I was so cold when I was running away—so cold! I might have stolen the woman's shawl, but I was afraid to waken her."

"You certainly should have had a shawl," he agreed, "on a night like this. How far did you have to walk?"

"I ran as hard as I could for four or five blocks. Then I saw some men coming out of a long house painted green. It had an arc light before it, and a gold sign that said 'Tony Costello'. The men were drunk, all but one. They were talking in Italian. I hid in a doorway till they passed. The sober man was Salviotti." She shivered. "Then I ran on again and at last I came to streets with American names. I thought the only person for me to go to would be a doctor, or a clergyman, or some one like that. I knew I couldn't go into any one of these houses and have them believe me. They'd turn me over to the police, and Salviotti said he 'had the police fixed'. The globe over your porch was shining, and I read your name, 'Doctor Langstaff,' on the plate. I couldn't have gone any farther anyway—so I—I—came—in—"

"What is your name?" he asked, and regretted the simple question as her haunted eyes again filled with tears.

"I don't know," she whispered. "That's one of the terrible things. I've

tried and tried to remember something of the time before I woke up, and I can't. I don't know who I am, or where I came from, or who my people are. I only—I do know I'm not Italian, although I speak it. I know my hair wasn't red. I know I never lived as these Italians live. I'm terribly afraid of them. I'm very valuable to them in the show they give. I heard them talking about it." She shuddered.

"Rest a little now," he said. "You shall have my bed, and I'll sleep down here, and to-morrow we'll decide what is to be done. I'll give you some brandy and milk, and then you mustn't talk any more to-night."

He left in a whirl of thoughts. His belief in her insanity was slipping away—at least he saw that it was no longer a question of violent dementia. Now it seemed a case of amnesia, of loss of identity. She was obviously not of Salviotti's class. Her description of Tony Costello's place of evil fame had been accurate. Salviotti had bragged, she had said, that he had fixed the police.

To his cost, Doctor Langstaff knew of the power of the big padrone. It was Salviotti who had taught him how useless it was to interfere in the Colony. It was Salviotti's boycott that had made Bouston hate the doctor for a bungling, meddling fool.

As Langstaff poured the milk from the bottle into a glass, he came to a decision. For the present—at least until he had investigated the matter thoroughly—the police should know nothing of his strange patient. In some roundabout way he must learn if requests for information concerning her had been lodged at local headquarters. He hesitated, knowing the long ears and loose tongues of the telephone operators, but, finally deciding, he called the office of the *Messenger*, Newington's one newspaper, and asked for Telmack. The night editor's voice sounded over the wire.

"Hello, old sport. You just caught me—I'm off. Anything stirring?"

"No," said Langstaff. "Just got in from a case and felt sort of wakeful. Drop in on your way home and have a bite with me, will you?"

Telmack read "news" in the guarded speech.

"All right," he yawned into the receiver. "I'll be with you in about ten minutes."

The doctor sighed with relief and, glass in hand, returned to his patient. He found her with closed eyes, seemingly asleep.

"Come," he pleaded gently. "Drink this."

Obediently she drank and, without unclosing her sapphire eyes, sighed again and slept.

Langstaff looked at her, then tiptoed from the room and up to his own bedroom. He drew the shades, prepared the narrow bed, and laid out one of his own dressing gowns. Then he hesitated. With the morning would come Eulalia, the maid of all work. Eulalia dwelt in the Colony. It might be well to keep her in ignorance of the girl's presence. There was the guest room across the hall. He would keep the key and minister to her wants himself until he could find a safe refuge for her. He would pay Eulalia off in the morning and discharge her. The depletion of the ice box would afford a good excuse. For weeks, now, he had winked at the pilfering that had undoubtedly reduced the high cost of living to Eulalia's family.

He opened the disused guest room, raised the window to air its mustiness, turned down the covers of the bed, transferred the dressing gown, and turned on the heat. Descending to the lower floor, he brought cloths, a basin of warm water, and alcohol, and, kneeling before the girl, bathed her bloodstained feet with the tenderness of a mother. How small they were,

those slender feet—the skin how fine! Their soles were as soft as the palm of a pampered hand. Until this night's mad escape, they had not been set to floor or pavement for many days, perhaps weeks. She did not move or waken.

He was bent above his task when his bell rang. As a matter of precaution, he closed the consultation-room door before opening that leading to the street. But the light revealed only Telmack. The little man's alert eyes took in Langstaff's tall figure, his coatless torso, rolled-up sleeves, and the bath towel lying across his arm. He stepped in quickly.

"Um," he said, "something doing? I thought so." He jerked his round, birdlike head toward the consulting room.

"Yes," said the doctor, answering both the question and the nod. "In there. I don't know just what to do. You may be able to help. Come in and have a look." He wanted to watch Telmack's face when he should see the girl.

Telmack stopped short, staring at her in amazement.

"Is she dead?" he asked in an awed voice. "Lord, what a beauty! Who is she?"

"She's sleeping from exhaustion. Her feet are all cut and scratched. I've just been washing them. Look at that." The doctor raised a slender foot, gently turning it. "See that?" he repeated. "And what do you make of her wearing that thing?" with a gesture toward the white lawn garment.

"A shroud!" Telmack whispered in wonder. "What's the answer? A too-hasty burial?"

"I'm going to carry her upstairs now," said Langstaff. "I'm going to put her in the guest room, and keep Eulalia out of it. She's something those devils in the Colony have kidnaped, or I miss my guess. Wait a

minute and I'll be down and tell you all I know."

He lifted the light weight in his arms and strode up the stairs, laid his burden on the bed, tucked in the covers, and locked the door, taking the key. Below, he found Telmack pacing the floor, a frown on his face.

"Say," he said suddenly as Langstaff appeared, "I think I know who your visitor is. Ripley came in from the police station with a story that the Italian boss had been in asking the police to locate a girl, a sort of half-witted relation of a visiting cousin of his, who had wandered off. He showed a birth certificate, proving that she was born in this country and not to be deported if found. His description fits exactly, and he seemed very anxious. You'd better turn in your information at once."

"I will not," said Langstaff doggedly. "Wait till you hear what she told me and then talk."

Telmack listened in silence as the doctor repeated the conversation, his bright eyes growing brighter as the tale progressed.

"You see," said Langstaff—and, in spite of himself, a pleading note found its way into the voice he tried to make judicial—"she's a lady unquestionably. She speaks and looks and acts the lady. She's in terror of those people, I tell you. But she has no more idea of who she is than a week-old baby. She's lost her identity. It's for us to find out who she is. You know if that gang gets hold of her again—and trust Salviotti to have everything framed legally—they'll have her spirited away—for ransom, or whatever crime they're working—and she'll not have a chance to escape again."

"I should think," ruminated Telmack, "that the best thing would be to take her in your motor over to the State asylum and have her put under observation."

The doctor shook his head.

"Her so-called relatives would take her right out, if they got a writ and gave assurance that they were able and willing to take care of her. I can't see any safety for her if she's allowed to fall into their clutches. I can't prove she isn't everything that Salviotti says she is. No, Telmack, she'll have to be hidden till we can get at the root of all this. Haven't you got a good Italian reporter who's in the know about what's going on in the Colony? Didn't you tell me about a chap who covers that news for you and does Sunday specials? Could you trust him to find out what she means—what sort of a show they could give with her that she'd be worth a lot of money for? She's too weak to do any stunts—she's half starved. Can't you turn your man loose on this for a couple of days?"

Telmack considered a moment.

"Yes," he decided. "I'll do it. It seems only fair. But if I'm going to conspire with you, I'd better get out of here before any one sees me—even a milk-wagon driver. Those dagos are pretty slick when it comes to the dark and underhand. Good night, Langstaff. But I tell you right now you'll be in most infernally wrong if that young woman is located in your first-floor front, and it won't be only Black Hands that'll be raised against you, believe me! All the same, you're a brick, and I'll send out my sleuth."

"By the way, Salviotti had with him the man who claims to be this girl's father. Ripley said he was an awful-looking animal—tall, thin, devil-faced, regular Mephisto. Doesn't sound much like the progenitor of that piece of porcelain upstairs, does it? Well, I'm off. Go to bed and get some rest yourself. You look all in." The older man reached up and affectionately patted the broad shoulder of the worried young physician. "Go to bed, knight-errant. Just the same, you've

got one grand little story here in the making."

Left alone, Langstaff made his rounds, securing every door and window. He found his revolver, broke it, and assured himself that its six chambers were loaded before he placed it on the night stand by his bed and turned in.

Weary though he was, he could not sleep. A thousand questions rose before him, demanding answers. The vision of the girl herself drifted before his tired, aching eyes with photographic detail—the startling sapphire eyes, vivid with life in her colorless face, with its waxen perfection of feature; the sharp line of cheek and chin; the broad forehead from which the strange, almost magenta-colored hair grew in crisp waves; the dark, fine line of the eyebrows, as narrow and defined as the eyebrows of a Chinese woman; the frail lily stem of her neck; the emaciated body under the lank lawn folds. What was the riddle of her history? Why were her poor torn feet as delicate as those of a person long bedridden, when yet she had found strength to run over the cruel pavements for half a mile or more before falling exhausted at his door? He felt that the girl and her mystery had come to take full possession of him. He was selected by fate, chosen out of all the world by something more than chance, for the quest of her lost personality, for the sheltering of this wandering ego without a past. And the first and only way to serve her was to protect the secret of her presence in his home.

He fell into troubled sleep at last, and awoke with a sense of responsibility that at first he could not identify. Then he sat up with sudden recollection and a stab of fear. The last was occasioned by the familiar sound of Eulalia moving about downstairs. Eulalia, fat, middle-aged, stupid, nevertheless spelled danger. She represented

the violent, superstition-ridden, crime-infested, pullulating hordes of the Colony, with its dense thousands of undigested foreigners, its mixture of races, each more irresponsible, vicious and reckless than the last—the filthy whirlpool of life that had spewed forth his helpless charge and that would, he knew, bend its fierce energies to draw her once more into its black vortex. Eulalia must be got rid of, and that quickly.

Langstaff rose hastily, tubbed and dressed, and sallied out into the passage. Before the locked door he hesitated, not daring to enter, lest the unaccustomed sound reach the ears of the Italian woman. He descended hastily with assumed anger, to which his nervousness lent force.

Eulalia was on her knees, scrubbing the floor of the consultation room. She lifted her full-jowled face and sat on her heels to meet the storm. Her conscience was sufficiently guilty to make her accept the scolding meekly. She had wondered why it had not come before, for her pilferings from the larder had been overbold. Now she blubbered forth a tangled tale of sickness and many small children, a husband out of work, the demands of the padrone, the labor unions, and a dozen other causes; wept and begged and promised never in the future to appropriate so much as a box of matches; called attention to the fact that she worked for the illustrious signor with gladness, not even objecting to cleaning up dreadful messes, such, for instance, as that which now occupied her ministering hands.

Langstaff realized with a gasp and a pound of the heart that he had come upon her in the act of removing the basin and cloths he had used the night before in attendance on his guest. He paused abruptly, and Eulalia continued to wail her contritions, amazed to find her easy-going employer inflexible.

She was to go, he informed her, at once. No, he would not partake of breakfast prepared by her thieving hands; he did not wish to look upon her again. When a worn-out doctor returned from performing operations on thankless people with broken heads, he at least had a right to expect that his ice box should not be looted of all but scraps, and only one bottle of beer left out of a whole dozen. Eulalia could take her unearned week's wages and go.

Eulalia was puzzled. That she should be sent packing was only right and natural—but why pay her? Why not make use of her services at least for the day? She hauled herself to her feet, seized the bill he tossed to her, and waddled tearfully to the kitchen. Langstaff followed her, and with a stony glare watched her put on her small, thin white shawl with its border of red roses and her large woolen gloves and, with many protestations to all the saints, take her tearful departure. He sighed with relief as the door closed behind her. Eulalia waddled down the short garden path, clicked the gate, and turned to look back at the bachelor Eden from which she had been evicted.

It had been a nice, profitable job, with excellent pickings. She sighed. Then she noticed that the window of the always closed guest room was wide open, its white curtains stirring in the draft. Between them she caught a glimpse of the doctor's tall figure, and as she turned heavily homeward, her Latin mind was busy.

The doctor stood at the foot of the guest-room bed, looking down at its occupant. She was even more wonderful than he had remembered; she was an even deeper enigma.

Her sleep was heavy, like a comatose condition. His coming had not awakened her. She did not stir when he spoke. He lifted her hand and felt

her pulse, frowned at its faintness, and, leaning over, raised her to a sitting position. He flipped her pale cheeks quickly with his fingers, hating himself for the seeming indignity.

"Come!" he called. "Come! Wake up!"

There followed a long pause that frightened him; then her great eyes slowly opened, seeming to envelop him in blue light, and—wonder of wonders!—she smiled. For the flash of that smile, her whole face became radiant—she was another person; a gay, whimsical, merry soul glanced quickly from the window of her being and then retreated.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Where am I? I never saw this room before, did I?"

"No," he said, "never. I carried you up here last night. You fell asleep in the chair. Do you remember about last night?"

"Yes," she exclaimed eagerly. "I remember everything. You wanted me to have some milk, didn't you?" He nodded. "Then you went out of the room and I got dizzy—then nothing. You—you didn't tell the police?" There was sudden terror in her voice.

"No, no," he reassured her. "How do you feel—stronger?"

"Oh, yes," she said, "ever so much. I could get up, I think."

He handed her his dressing gown, slipping it over her shoulders. She was engulfed in its folds, as ridiculously as a child dressed in grown-up garments. She gave a gleeful chuckle. Again that elfin personality smiled and was gone. She slipped to her feet to the floor and drew them up with a little whimper of pain.

"Don't try it," he advised. "I'll bring you some breakfast, and then I'll dress those scratches. Lie back and be comfortable. Don't worry. You're quite safe."

He went downstairs, regretting that

he had not taken his servant's suggestion as to breakfast. He felt pitifully thumb-handed and helpless, though, in fact, he rather prided himself on being a good camp cook. He managed, indeed, to prepare a tray that would have been a credit to any trained nurse—coffee, a poached egg, a saucer of milk toast. He returned to his guest and found her sitting up in bed, looking with wonder at her own hands, which she turned back and forth as does a baby. She turned to him, her mouth drawn down grievously.

"How awfully thin they are!" she said. "I'm sure they weren't like that before. I somehow expected them to be plump, with rings on them. I can almost remember the rings, and then I find I can't. Oh, egg!" This last exclamation occasioned by the advent of the tray. "I'm so hungry!"

She demolished her breakfast and looked up, humbly questioning.

"Not now," he laughed. "More in an hour or two. You've been starved, evidently. When do you remember eating last, and what was it?"

She shook her head.

"I don't know. I have a sort of feeling of milk—hot milk, strong and sweetish, but it isn't a real memory—it's a sort of under sensation. When I really woke up, it was in a glass case. Listen—I want to tell you all I remember—now while I can. Something might happen and I'd forget."

She spoke hurriedly, as if expecting every moment to be interrupted in her recital. The doctor opened his lips to restrain her excited confession; then he thought better of it, and sat back in his chair, listening with rapt attention.

"Let me begin right at the beginning in the glass case. I sat up and my head hit the lid, and somebody screamed." She paused a moment, as if overcome by the recollection. "A tall man who was talking almost fainted. I saw his face through the

glass. Then I must have fainted, too, because, when I came to again, I was lying on a bed in a darkened room, with candles at my head and feet. I woke up slowly this time. It was like rising, rising, up through water, until I got to the surface, and floated there. I was aware of a lot that was going on before I could do anything besides lie perfectly still.

"A tall, thin man, with a devil's face, was standing at the foot of the bed. He was speaking to me. 'La Morta'—'the dead woman'—he called me. And then I heard myself answering; but I knew that it wasn't I who spoke, and it wasn't my voice. I could see his lips move ever so slightly—he was sounding his voice in a whisper over to me. I was lying on the surface of the black depths when I reasoned that out—I don't believe I could have moved or spoken if I'd wanted to. It was like a nightmare. I heard more questions. I heard the man answer, and his voice sounded as if it came from me.

"A woman was crying softly. I heard that ventriloquist voice tell her about how happy her son was in heaven, and then came a message from the son in heaven, saying he owed Salvietti a debt of five hundred dollars, money he had borrowed before he died, and that she must surely pay it or her son in heaven would be very angry. The woman cried and promised. And all the time I was coming to.

"Then they all went out, leaving me alone, and I sat up and looked around. It was a horrible place, dark and dirty. There wasn't any window, except one that opened on a shaft. Painted tin wreaths hung all around the walls, like in a church, and tablets with testimonials of thanks for messages from friends and relatives." Again she paused, with wide eyes. She seemed to see the surroundings of her strange awakening.

"The glass case was in a corner on a trestle, with the top open," she resumed. "Inside, there was a white silk pad and a white velvet pillow. I got up and went over to look at it—but I couldn't remember anything at all about anything that had happened before I woke up in it. And then I knew from something inside of me that this sort of forgetfulness happened to people sometimes—that they forgot absolutely who they were and all about themselves. I was terribly frightened, but I could think and reason. I wanted to find out more about myself, and where I was, and who these dreadful people were. So, when I heard voices, I got back on the bed and covered up and lay perfectly still. The tall man—they called him Dario—came in with the one called Salviotti, the one the voice from heaven had ordered the money paid to. And right in the middle of their talk I fell asleep."

She paused for breath. Her unspoken fear that the treacherous drowsiness would descend upon her again before she could complete her narrative showed in her anxious haste to complete her story. Indeed, she seemed relieved and surprised to have progressed thus far in her autobiography without interruption.

"Do you believe me?" she asked abruptly. "I know it doesn't sound like sense."

"Of course," the doctor said with conviction. "Your case is by no means rare. You'll find yourself. It'll take a little time, and you mustn't worry or get discouraged. And don't expect to fall asleep at any moment. It won't happen. You're going to sleep and wake and eat and talk quite normally. You've passed out of that period of intermittent consciousness—do you understand? Now, when you feel like it, go on telling me what happened."

She gazed at him with appraising eyes.

"What's *your* name?" she asked. "Oh, I remember—Doctor Langstaff. Tell me, do you know who these people are? Do you know anything about this Salviotti?"

Langstaff nodded.

"I know a good deal about Salviotti. That's one reason why I hid you," he answered gravely, "when you spoke of him last night. He's been asking for you at police headquarters. He claims that you are his cousin's child." She drew the folds of the dressing gown about her with a frightened gesture. He read her terror. "He shan't find you. I told you I wouldn't give you up," he reiterated. "Can't I see with half an eye that you don't belong to the Salviottis?"

She sank back among the pillows and stared for a moment in silence at her reflection in the dressing-table mirror opposite.

"What an awful-looking thing I am!" she digressed. She gulped and withdrew her fascinated gaze from her reflection. "Where was I? Oh, yes! When I fell asleep while the men were talking, the last thing I remember was the tall man saying they mustn't branch out too much or they'd get into trouble with the police. And it was then that Salviotti laughed and said nobody need be afraid, he had them 'fixed'—'fixed'. He repeated it over again and snapped his fingers as if he were insulting somebody—so."

She made a swift gesture that for mimicry could not have been improved upon. It brought the swarthy Salviotti and his excited, waving hands vividly before Langstaff.

"Then I woke up again," the girl continued. "I was lying on a cot in another room—just a regular room, with lithograph Madonnas on the walls. A big red eiderdown quilt lay over my feet, and a little round stove stood in the corner. It was awfully hot and close, and a very old woman sat sleep-

ing by the stove with a cat on her shoulder. She had a shawl wrapped around her, even over her head, and I couldn't see her face—just a wisp of white hair and her old, old hands in the red glare of the stove. And all of a sudden I had a panic. I felt that I must get out—I must escape. I tip-toed to the door and listened. It was cold in the hall and awfully quiet. Oh, I was so frightened! I tried to think, but I couldn't. I just wanted to escape. The outer door was only latched. There wasn't any one anywhere. There wasn't a light, even, except from the lamps in the street.

"I was out in the street at last, but I didn't know which way to turn. It was easier to run downhill, so I ran that way—and hid in a doorway in front of that green saloon when I saw the men come out. It wasn't until after I saw them that I began to reason that I must go somewhere. I remembered Salviotti had said that he had the police 'fixed'. Then I thought about a doctor or a preacher—and I came to you. That's all, absolutely all, I know about myself. Isn't it awful?"

She was trembling, and something of the wild panic she described shone in her eyes. The doctor put out a soothing hand.

"You're safe," he repeated. "I'm going to get you away, out of this town, just as soon as I possibly can, and that'll be as soon as you're strong enough. Until then, be sure that not a soul will know or guess you are here—no one except a friend who will keep watch for us among the Italians and find out what he can about you. He's a man I can trust, whom *you* can trust implicitly. He saw you last night. Come now, you're not to be frightened."

"All right, I won't be," she said boyishly.

A bell shrilled in his room across the hall. They both started nervously.

"The telephone," he said, and rose to answer it, leaving the door open. The call was from Porozzi's grocery. Emilie was full of fever and delirious, it seemed. Would the doctor please come immediately? Nicolo was frightened and contrite. Langstaff was confronted with the first of the endless series of problems that were to absorb his days. What should he say—what *could* he say? Obviously he must attend his patients or cause comment. He recalled that his notebook was particularly full of engagements for that day. But the girl? Left alone, what might not happen to her? Another sudden panic, and then—what?

"I'll come at once, or send some one," he answered and, acting on impulse, he called up Doctor Bradley on the other side of the town, explained that he had been called away on an emergency case, and asked him to see the Porozzis.

Doctor Bradley had the old-town practice and he obviously did not relish the assignment. Professional courtesy required his acquiescence, however, and he curtly consented.

Langstaff was relieved for the moment, but he sat staring at the telephone in consternation. What in the world was he to do? He could not count on Telmack to "spell him," turn and turn about; Telmack's time was not his own. He could not refuse to visit his patients without giving a reason. The girl must not be left alone, and he dared employ no one. Every angle of the situation presented an impossibility.

Her voice calling his name aroused him—in fact, it startled him; it sounded so resonant in the silence of the house. He jumped guiltily. She was sitting up in bed, and her mouth was set with determination.

"Of course I overheard," she said. "You've got to go out. There's nobody else in the house, is there?" He

answered in the negative. "Then lock everything downstairs," she said, with matter-of-fact directness, "and when you come back, ring four times before you let yourself in, so I'll know it's you. I promise I won't run away. I'm not afraid here at all—not really. And, besides, you've got to get me some clothes. You know I can't go on living in this white thing and your dressing gown. So you'd better go about it the right way." She spoke whimsically, but as one used to command.

"I hadn't thought of that," he murmured. "But you can't get up yet a while, you know. There's plenty of time."

"I could hobble if I had to," she replied, with a faint flush in her white cheeks.

"Well, we'll hope you won't have to," he answered. "I think perhaps you're right and I'd better go now. I'll leave a note on the door, saying the maid is gone and I'm out. If anybody rings, let 'em ring. I'll come back as quickly as I can."

"I want something to read," she said, still with that note of authority in her voice. "I'll go crazy if I sit and wonder who I am." She paused. "Isn't this the *maddest* situation?" she exclaimed. Then the elfin smile tilted the corners of her mouth. "I'm perfectly certain I'm awfully nice, whoever I am. I have a feeling that I'm somebody worth while." The smile fled from her lips, which drew down, piteously childlike. "Oh, how I wish I knew!"

He took her thin hand and patted it.

"We'll find out, I promise," he said in much the same tone in which he would have assured a sick child of a slice of the moon.

He piled her lap with old magazines and, after making a tour of the house, departed to the tiny garage that sheltered his car. He consulted his note-

book. Headless of the needs of his patients, he was thinking only of clothes. Where could he steal clothes? To buy women's raiment was out of the question. Slender as the girl was, she could pass for a boy—but how account for buying boy's clothes? And besides, if she had to take to that disguise to escape, it would necessitate cutting off those heavy magenta-colored braids. Again he consulted his list. Mrs. Baldwin, the general manager's wife—too tall and fat. Miss Weinstock, the head stenographer—perhaps; it was worth trying. The factory hospital patients were all men. There remained only Mrs. Watkins—too little and old-fashioned. Yes, but her nieces? Langstaff proceeded on his rounds.

Miss Weinstock's ailment, being merely a bad cold, left her too free to move about, and in vain the doctor looked for some necessary article to "lift" for his protégée. The stenographer was at his heels, even insisting on going to the door with him. To this he objected on medical grounds, ordering her back to her room. She went, flattered at his nervous anxiety for her welfare. Then he snatched her new blue waterproof coat from the rack by the door and, holding it wrapped bundlewise in front of him, walked straight for the car, dropped the coat and his medicine case on the floor, and, seating himself at the wheel, turned his pale face toward the boarding house, from whose second-floor-front window he beheld his victim smiling down at him.

She could not have seen the coat in his hands, he reasoned, but beads of perspiration nevertheless gathered on his brow as he bowed to her and pressed the self-starter. He had never realized how hard it is to steal.

His rounds at the hospital were perfunctory. Then he drove quickly to the elderly Mrs. Watkins' more pretentious

residence, which he approached from the rear. Enviously he gazed at drying lingerie flapping on the line, but a laundress with clothespins in her mouth was much in evidence. He drove on reluctantly. In the entrance hall hung a white polo coat and a black-and-white knitted tam-o'-shanter. The maid went up to announce his coming, and the doctor jerked the cap from the hook, thrusting it into his pocket.

Old Mrs. Watkins held forth at length as to numerous pains and aches, while the doctor's eyes roved the room. Oh, for a shirt waist or a pair of shoes! The dear soul's neat surroundings offered nothing of value. There was no way of innocently gaining access to the nieces' rooms. Langstaff, deeply disappointed, prescribed a few mild doses and took his leave. The hall was empty. The white polo coat looked warm and tempting. His fingers itched to snatch it. No, he argued, it was too noticeable. Whatever he acquired for his guest must be unobtrusive. His eye lighted on two pairs of rubber overshoes. Here, at least, was luck. Rubbers were not shoes, but they were foot coverings. He seized upon the smaller pair and hurried to the car.

As he ran through Main Street, he encountered Doctor Bradley's smart sedan car coming from the direction of the disreputable Italian hill. The doctor bowed curtly, and Langstaff, as he acknowledged the salute, cursed himself for a fool. Why had he sent Bradley to the Colony when he could perfectly well have gone himself? Now he would have to keep on lying about the emergency case. He had let his sudden panic scatter his wits completely.

He made various small purchases at the five-and-ten-cent store—pins and a ball of twine—which enabled him to pilfer a package of hairpins and a pair of cotton stockings. Elated with his criminal success, he speeded up the

long tree-lined street, crossed the bridge spanning the falls that supplied power for Newtonport's wealth, and, skirting the hill, drew up before his own door.

He turned off the power, gathered his ill-gotten gains together, and crossed the lawn. With a wildly beating heart, he gave the signal ere he inserted the key in the lock. A voice on the landing greeted him as he entered.

"Oh, it's you. I'm *so* glad!"

He looked up to see her standing at the head of the stairs, in his trailing dressing gown, her bandaged feet thrust into a pair of his red morocco slippers.

"You bad child!" he roared. "Go back to bed!"

"All right," she agreed hastily and hobbled off, grotesquely hampered by her strange attire. He ran up the stairs and followed her, frowning. She flopped into bed and eyed him with guilty impishness.

"My feet are a whole lot better," she informed him; "just bruised a bit, really. But I do feel awfully wobbly. Do you suppose I've been very sick for a long while?"

He ignored her and walked out of the room in disapproving silence, to prepare her luncheon. When he returned with the loaded tray, he found her almost in tears. She scrambled toward the edge of the bed in her eagerness to make amends.

"I'm awfully ashamed of myself," she burst out. "But I keep forgetting how much I'm indebted to you, and that I'm a perfect stranger. You see, you're about the only person I know in the world. I'm sorry I displeased you. I'll do anything you say."

Her wonderful, resonant voice vibrated with emotion. Langstaff resisted the impulse to melt completely. If he was to help her, he must enforce

authority now or never. He set the tray before her.

"If I am to assume the responsibility of your case," he said severely, "I require absolute obedience."

She nodded repentantly, but the sight of the milk toast was too much for her irrepressible spirits.

"O-oh!" she cried. "How grand!"

With the gusto of a growing boy, she made short work of the repast.

"I can't make out why you're so starved," the doctor observed. "Do you suppose they did it intentionally?"

She shook her head.

"I wish I could tell you," she sighed.

"Let's try," he suggested, "if we can find your name. Let's go over names alphabetically, beginning with Adèle. You'd recognize it now, I'm sure. Alice, Agatha—"

"Oh," she cried, "not Agatha! Now you don't think I'd be named Agatha, do you?"

"How do I know?" he retorted testily.

She wilted.

"It isn't Agatha," she insisted humbly, "nor 'Arabella. I don't feel as if it began with 'A'. 'A's aren't familiar."

"'B', then," he persisted. "Beatrice?"

She shook her head.

"Belle? Bess? Benita? Caroline? Cora? Carmen? Cecily? Celia? Dora? Dorothy? Delia? Dot? Dolly? Dulcinea? Dolores?"

Down through the alphabet of names they worked excitedly to Xanthippe and Zorah, without result.

"Isn't it awful?" she cried in despair. "I must have a name—I've simply got to have a name! I'll call myself 'Perdita'. That means 'lost', doesn't it?"

He laughed.

"Good! Perdita, Miss Perdita Trouvée. The lost is—"

He paused anxiously at her sudden expression of wonder.

"Trovée! That's French for

"found!" she exclaimed. She caught his hand gleefully. "Why, I speak French! I do!" she cried. "It's coming back in strings. '*Maitre Corbeau, sur un arbre perché, tenait dans son bec un fromage.*'" She recited the fable of the fox and the crow through to the end without a trace of English accent, and followed it up with a torrent of purest Parisian. She stopped suddenly and faced him with a drop into slang: "Now what do you know about that?"

To tell the truth, he was bewildered, but he answered calmly:

"You're doing splendidly. At this rate, we'll soon have you remembering everything, Miss Trouvée."

She laughed and clapped her hands.

"Miss Trouvée—Perdita Trouvée. Thank you so much! It isn't often one can choose one's own names, is it? I'm so glad I didn't recognize 'Agatha' or 'Boadicea' or 'Margaret' or any of those. Perdita Trouvée—won't that look well written? Give me a pencil. I want to write it." She was as excited and jubilant as a child with a new toy.

He handed her his fountain pen and prescription pad. She scribbled in a big, flowing, determined hand: "Perdita Trouvée, Perdita Trouvée."

"Isn't that a beautiful little autograph?" she bubbled. "Now that I've got a name, if I only had some clothes, I'd be real."

He rose shamefacedly.

"I got a few things this morning. They're not what they ought to be," he admitted, "but, you see, I couldn't buy any without attracting attention. I had to take what came handy."

The light of understanding glowed in her face.

"You stole them!" she shrieked. "From your patients?" He nodded ruefully. She burst into irresistible laughter. "Oh"—she checked herself—"isn't it awful?" and she laughed again.

To hide his own sheepish grin, he went in search of the loot. She eyed the collection he spread before her and laughed till she cried. Sobering suddenly, she laid her hand, quick with gratitude, on his arm.

"I'm a pig!" she exclaimed. "Do forgive me! You know there aren't thanks enough in all the world for you."

"I was thinking all the time," he said gravely, "that if we had to run for it—if they traced you here—these would cover you up, anyway, till we could get somewhere where I could buy you things, don't you see?"

Her smiling face darkened as he spoke.

"Those people——" she stammered. "Of course, yes—— I must be able to get away."

She dragged the raincoat toward her as if its dark folds offered protection. To calm her quick terror, he handed her the package of hairpins. She took them without comment, and began with agile fingers to unbraid her hair. He brought her his comb, but its short teeth could make little impression on the tawny masses.

She was silent now, her brow wrinkled in an effort of memory. Automatically she went on weaving her hair, coiled it into a figure eight at the back of her neck, and secured it with quick, accustomed gestures. He watched her, fascinated.

"Evidently that's the way you always do it," he observed.

She roused from her reverie and twisted till her reflection in the mirror met her eye. The blood crimsoned her cheeks, her lips paled. There was a flash of recognition; then her color ebbed and she threw herself back among the pillows.

"It's gone!" she sobbed. "I almost remembered myself—and I'm gone!"

"Never mind, Perdita," he soothed, "never mind. You'll come back."

A ring at the doorbell startled them to silence.

"Don't be frightened," he said, though his own heart was beating heavily. "A patient, probably. Lock the door when I'm gone." He left her gazing after him, white-faced and fearful.

At the hall door he was nonplussed to find Eulalia. She was voluble and humble. Emilie was worse, much worse. The new doctor who had come to see her had done no good at all. It was, she knew, Doctor Langstaff's office hours. She herself had volunteered to come and assume her former duties for a little. She would tell the patients to wait, and surely the place must need cleaning, and there must be dishes. The doctor could trust her, so witness all the saints.

Langstaff watched her. He was not satisfied with the plausible story. There was something furtive and frightened about her. He sensed anxiety and fear in the grip of her hands on her rose-bordered shawl. Far down the street, at a distant corner, stood a small brown automobile. A man lounged behind the wheel. The car was Marino's, the Italian contractor. Marino was Salviotti's brother-in-law.
2+2+2—?

The doctor opened the door behind him, bidding his former servant enter. He conducted her to the kitchen and showed her the jumbled dishes in the sink.

"You can wash these," he said, "while I do some telephoning. Then I'll see the Porozzis."

Obediently Eulalia set to work. Langstaff hurried to the telephone, with one ear for the clatter of the servant's activities. He guardedly warned Telmack, whom he located at his own house.

"I want about five hundred dollars, old man," he said. "Could you get it and bring it over? I'll give you my

check, but I'm too busy to go out, and my second payment on those bonds was due yesterday. Want to clean up in cash with Beaton—you understand?"

Telmack understood.

"I'll be over in ten minutes," he growled. "Just time to stop at the bank. So long."

Langstaff busied himself on the lower floor. He feared to attract attention if he went upstairs—yet go he must. Perdita must be warned of Eulalia's menacing presence. At length he mounted the stairs, whistling, going noisily first to his own room, where he collected whatever money remained in his various pockets, fitted his surgical case with various necessaries unknown to the profession, and slipped his automatic into his pocket. Then he tiptoed across the hall, still whistling. He tapped lightly four times. The door opened, revealing Perdita—an almost unrecognizable Perdita. The tam-o'-shanter covered her hair; the blue raincoat was buttoned tight to her throat; her feet, in the black cotton stockings, were thrust into the rubbers; and the blue velveteen portière that had swung before an alcove closet was wrapped about her, simulating a skirt.

"When you went down," she whispered, "I tried to see who was at the door. I crept to the window. I saw the Italian—the tall man, Dario—pass across the street. He was watching this house. Somebody is downstairs. Who?"

"A servant I used to have," he answered, whispering. "There's no doubt they suspect you are here—how, I don't know. Now, when you hear me sneeze, go down the back stairs—there, you see the way." He pointed down the short corridor. "When you hear me swear in the kitchen, go straight out to the garage. You'll see it right by the back door. Get into the car, lie down in the bottom of the tonneau, and cover yourself with rugs. I'll be

out in a minute, and we'll give 'em the slip. Can you walk that far?"

She nodded. Langstaff descended the stairs, went into the consulting room, and called Eulalia. She came, a plate in one hand, a dishrag in the other.

"Here!" he snapped. "I want you to take this across the way to Mrs. Lawson. I won't have time to stop and see her if I go to the Porozzis."

He poured some pellets into an envelope, wrote directions, and thrust the packet into Eulalia's moist hand.

"I finish my dish," she said quickly. "After you go, I take him."

"No, you won't," said Langstaff. "I don't trust you. Do it now."

Reluctantly she took the paper and, without waiting to put down dish or cloth, ran out of the front door and across the road. As she went, Langstaff sneezed furiously. Overhead he heard a tottering脚步. He stood on the threshold in plain sight of the street for a moment. The brown car still waited at the curb. He despaired Telmack's hurrying figure approaching from the opposite direction. The garage was almost directly back of the house and the moment was propitious. Langstaff went into the kitchen and swore madly at the range. The back door clicked—a shadow slipped by on the gravel path.

With a sigh of relief, the doctor hurried once more to the front of the house. Eulalia was speaking with some one in the Lawson house. She turned and recrossed the street. As a tall man passed her, she gave an imperceptible nod and came directly on. The tall man continued in the direction of the brown car, and almost at the gate Telmack met Eulalia. She cringed servilely to her ex-master's friend, and stood aside as he came up the steps, making her own way around to the rear entrance.

The doctor admitted Telmack, who

handed him a roll of bills and received a check.

"Can you stay here a while?" asked Langstaff under his breath. "They've traced her here. They're trying to get me out of the house, so they can make sure. If I refuse to go, it amounts to a confession that I'm sheltering her. I want to keep them in doubt as long as possible. After I'm gone, pretend to miss something out of your overcoat and accuse Eulalia. Say I told you I discharged her for stealing. She won't know whether you're playing a game or not. Get her out of here. Then they can search the house later—I don't care. What did you hear from your reporter?"

"He says the Colony is buzzing, but he can't make head or tail of it. Marino and Salvietti and Dario are after the lost girl; they have the whole police force out, have offered rewards, and all that. But he says the little fry are all stirred up about something they don't dare talk about. They've had a terrible scare thrown into them. They won't talk. Where is she?"

The doctor provided himself with an extra overcoat, put his cases together, crammed into his pocket the newspaper he had been reading the night before, and nodded toward the back door.

"What do you want with that stale paper?" wondered Telmack.

"Newspaper's a good chest protector. She hasn't too many clothes—next to nothing," he whispered. "I'm going now. Good-by—and thanks."

"You'll be back to-night?" inquired Telmack anxiously.

"How do I know?" said Langstaff and, walking calmly to the car, he tossed in his impedimenta, settled himself behind the wheel, and rolled slowly out of the little shelter. He paused as he passed the kitchen.

"Eulalia," he called, "back at five—and you get out of here as soon as

you've cleaned up. If you touch that beer, I'll send you to jail."

He threw out the clutch, and the car glided to the street. He turned in the direction of the Colony. Far down the avenue the brown car came to life, circled, slid down a side street, and was gone.

Langstaff glanced over his shoulder at the heap of rugs in the tonneau behind him, and his teeth set grimly. He skirted the Colony in the direction that led to the shack occupied by the Porozzis; then swung to the right, through the factory district, following the mill-lined course of the river; then out into the country as quickly as his throbbing engine would take him. He was thoroughly puzzled. His motor and he were known in all the environs—his travels could be traced with perfect ease. Then how lose an automobile completely? Run it into the river? The shallow channel was nowhere deep enough to conceal a car. The woods? They were too open, too well forested.

On and on they whirred, passing factory town after factory town, plunging again into the open country. The biting wind of March refused to go down with the sun. Langstaff paused long enough to unfold the newspaper and see it securely buttoned under the blue waterproof. "Better than nothing," he said, and resumed the flight. Twilight announced itself, chill and dreary. In the gray of the evening, they reached a bleak land of stone pastures and silence. Twice they passed abandoned farmhouses, but they were set so close to the road that he instinctively discarded them as possibilities.

Then, high on a bare knoll, the ruin of a house and a huge dilapidated barn showed for a moment against the sky. Langstaff changed the gears. He had not thought to fill the supply tank before leaving. Perdita must wait somewhere while he secured a fresh supply

of gasoline. He turned in at the fallen gate, climbed the rough road, circled behind the dwelling, drove into the open mouth of the barn, and stopped. The thousand noises of a long-empty house assailed his ears as the echoes of the exhaust ceased. Rats scuttled in the rafters; furtive wings flapped; the floor creaked ominously under the unaccustomed weight; something stirred and sniffled in the darkness of a stall; something in flight thudded against an obstruction.

Langstaff sat still behind the wheel until his eyes became accustomed to the darkness.

The rugs in the tonneau stirred.

"My goodness!" said a voice, and again he was startled by its vibrant power. "I am cramped. I don't care where we are, I'm glad we're there!"

"Wait," he said, "I'll help you. Don't try to get out. Climb up on the seat and rest while I look this place over."

He heard her disengage herself from the wraps and saw the pale oval of her face in the darkness as she lifted herself into an easier position.

"It's a barn!" she cried in tones of pleased discovery. "I smell hay!"

"It's a barn," he answered, "but I doubt if there's much fodder. Good thing our steed doesn't need that sort. Now I'm going to make sure there aren't any tramps settled in the house. Then I'll be back to get our dinner."

He went to the door and reconnoitered the situation—a scrap heap, a mangled dooryard, an overturned doghouse, and then the bulk of the long two-story stone house, black and forbidding. He advanced to a window and stood listening. Silence. Through the broken casement he looked the entire length of the building and out again through another sashless window to the wind-blown stretch of unplowed fields. He returned to the barn and unstrapped an elaborate luncheon kit,

which he opened by the light of the electric flash. He lit the alcohol lamp and filled the saucepan with water from a thermos bottle.

"Coffee in a minute," he announced. "I'm sorry I didn't have time to provision the schooner for the cruise, but I always carry biscuits in the forward hold." He opened a tin and set them before her.

"Oh!" she cried. "I *adore* a picnic! And isn't it wonderful to have no responsibilities at all? You have 'em all, poor dear, and I haven't one. I hope we go on—and on and on—"

"Indeed?" he said dryly, taking up both thermos bottles and walking toward the door. "I'm glad you like it. I'm going down to the spring—to that horse trough by the road. There may be a pump up here, but I wouldn't care to sample the water. There's hardly enough in that saucepan to make coffee for two. Do you mind if I leave you?"

"Oh, no," she replied. "Isn't this exciting! Woo, I'm chilly in spite of your newspaper! I wish this fire were bigger."

"Keep out of the draft," he warned, and hurried down the steep hill.

It was very dark as he plowed his way through the yielding mud. He lost his direction and found it again, guided to the tinkle of running water.

He hit the sharp corner of the log trough and swore roundly, mired himself again, and plunged his hand and arm up to the elbow into the icy water. At last he found the pipe that fed the drinking fountain and filled first one and then the other of the bottles, screwing down their caps securely. He was so intent upon his task that he did not hear Perdita stumbling toward him in the dark. It was her voice, trembling with excitement, that startled him.

"I speak German! I speak German!" was her amazing assertion.

"What?" exclaimed Langstaff. "Lord, how you startled me! You

shouldn't have come here! You must be mud to the eyes—and wet!"

"I couldn't help it," she whispered excitedly. "That's Italian and French and German and English I speak—and I had to come. You see, it was this way. I heard whispering outside the barn door. I crawled over and listened. There were two men talking. I understood them perfectly, and I knew it was German—awful peasant, Bavarian German, too. They were wondering what we were doing, hiding up there. One said he'd better get our number and go back to town and tell the sheriff. He guessed the automobile was stolen, and there'd be a reward. There must be a town just around the turn from here. If they'd been Italians instead of Germans, I'd have been too frightened to run."

Langstaff stood still, paralyzed by the thought of possible consequences which his companion did not seem to realize. They must get away at once, and without question they must get gasoline at the nearest town. The supply, he had ascertained, was dangerously low.

"Stay here," he ordered tensely. "I'll bring the car at once. Don't move." He felt in his overcoat pocket and clenched his fingers over the automatic. He might have to hold the fellows up. Then he glanced up with an exclamation. "Good heavens!"

A flare of clear yellow flame shot upward from the barn, a shower of red sparks followed, and even as they gazed, too startled to move, a second rush of fire swept upward in a great curve, caught and clung at the overhanging eaves, and licked under the loose shingles.

"The alcohol lamp!" cried Perdita. She started to run up the steep slope, stumbled, and fell.

"It's no use," said Langstaff calmly. "I couldn't get the car out now. That place is tinder."

He lifted her to her feet. The con-

flagration was progressing with startling rapidity; the old, dry timbers, the grain and straw-filled crannies, burned like tow. The flames seemed almost smokeless, and the wild glare lighted up all the countryside, showing the gutted house in sharp relief, the broken fences and dilapidated outbuildings.

The runaways gazed at each other in the blinding light.

"I was wondering how I was going to lose that car," its owner observed pleasantly. "That's a way of doing it I never thought of. I guess if your German friends didn't get the number before that happened, they'll never get it. That will be a furnace guaranteed to stew any metal, even a number plate!"

There was a sharp explosion. Perdita seized his arm with a little startled cry. The flames had reached the gasoline tank, and the dilapidated clapboards of the barn fell outward, showing for a moment the incandescent interior.

"Good-by, old car," said Langstaff. "You were a good car. I hope your soul will win all the races in the automobile heaven. And now I'll have to carry you, Perdita. We've got to go somewhere, you know."

"It was rather expensive for me to know German, wasn't it?" she said ruefully. "And how are you going to explain me to anybody?"

"You're my sister," he said as he gathered her in his arms and picked his way down the muddy road by the light of the conflagration.

Even as he spoke, he was aware that she was very much *not* his sister, this mysterious waif whom fate had intrusted to his care. As he held her frail body in his arms, he knew her for what she was—Romance, Adventure, Beauty, Youth, Mystery. She was a prize strange criminals sought to wrest from him. But she was his. She was nobody else's in all the world. She

knew nobody but him. She was more his than his own child could be, and he was bound to rescue her—from he knew not what. He trudged on. The glare behind him dimmed and faded, save for a pink glow in the sky above the shoulder of the hill. Ahead of them twinkled lights all in a row, evidently following the river. Other lights pricked the darkness at irregular intervals.

Just ahead, a lamp shone from the window of a frame house close to the road. He trudged on in silence, the lamp his beacon, perfectly happy to go on carrying his light burden forever down a muddy road in the teeth of a March wind. Suddenly her relaxed body became tense, then heaved spasmodically. He stopped short.

"Now, now," he begged, "don't cry. It'll be all right. There's nothing to be frightened about."

The spasm redoubled in force, and her voice rippled in his ear.

"I—I can't help laughing! It's so ridiculous!" She laughed again helplessly. "What do you suppose I am?" she demanded between spasms. "They wouldn't have a teacher of languages with dyed hair, would they?" Evidently her past occupied her mind to the exclusion of the awkward present. "I wonder whether I speak any others. If I could hear some Swedish or Russian—"

"We're likely to hear some pretty sharp American before long," he reminded her. "I'm going to put you down here. Then I'll have a look in at that window. If they're the right sort of people, we might ask for a night's lodging."

He set her down by the gate and tiptoed across the garden. Standing out of the range of the shaft of lamp-light, he stared in at the open casement. A lean woman sat at the table reading a fashion magazine. Her whiskered spouse lounged opposite, playing domi-

noes. The room was old-fashioned and severe; so were the occupants. Langstaff's heart sank. He felt that couple hopeless for his needs. The wife would have them on the witness stand at once; the husband might be bribed, but not if his wife knew it. Furthermore, they never would believe the sister story if they caught a glimpse of Perdita's magenta hair.

"It's no use," he heard her whisper, and he thrilled as he felt the soft touch of her fingers on his arm as she came up behind him. "Why, that woman would call the police. I know she eats nothing but lemons, and she drinks hard cider. Come away."

"Come away where?" demanded Langstaff irritably.

"I don't care where," she sighed. "I'm not responsible, you know. It's wonderful having no responsibility."

"Sh—ss!" he admonished. "She'll hear you. This is a tramp-infested country, and some of these farmers are quick on the trigger."

She subsided, then suggested in a voice as small as that of conscience:

"You're such a perfectly wonderful thief; don't you think you could steal their horse and wagon? I'm sure they have one. They're so far out in the country, and they'd never, never have a motor—it would be too newfangled. Let's hide in the barn, and when they've gone to bed, let's sneak away in the family barouche."

"I don't see anything else for it," he growled. "You can't walk; that's certain. Come on."

Cautiously, fearing the presence of possible "hired help," they crept to the stable, which bulked vaguely among the lilac bushes on the left. There was no light, no sound. The doors were closed, but yielded to his touch, and they entered the hay-perfumed darkness. They clung to each other, holding their breath like frightened children. They heard the shifting of stalled horses and

the subdued cooings of disturbed pigeons, but no sound of human occupancy. Langstaff struck a match; its glare caught the glossy rumps of a heavy work team, and the lighter quarters of a roadster. It showed the usual accumulation of tools and lumber, and revealed the presence of an ancient buggy, the harness carelessly thrown across the dashboard.

"There's the stair to the hayloft," whispered Perdita. "Be sure that match is dead. We can't afford to be incendiaries again."

She was already at the foot of the ladderlike steps. The match died to a red ember, and he heard her slowly moving upward in the dark. A flash of fear numbed him. She was so frail, her injured feet had so little protection—what if she should fall? It was foolhardy to let her thus endanger herself. Better far face the unwilling welcome of the wooden couple in the cast-iron drawing-room.

"All right," she called softly. "You next. It's lovely up here. I never smelled such good hay—only—before you come—do you think you could steal me a pie?"

"I'm not going to take a chance," he snapped, as he negotiated the first steps of the ascent. "We'll dine when I can buy a pie. This stealing gets on my nerves." He sat down on the top rung and looked about him at the new sanctuary.

"But I'm *so* hungry!" she complained. "And I know where that farmer's wife is, there simply *must* be pie."

"Wait till we get away," he objected testily. "I'll drive you to a pie." In his disapproving silence they heard the munching of the horses.

"Oats!" she murmured. "Oats are healthy. I believe I could even eat oats."

He heard her moving and the crack-

kle of the hay as she settled herself into the mow.

"Do be careful how you move around," he urged. "There might be pitchforks."

"Don't say 'forks' to me when I'm famished," she answered, and he heard her little sigh of resignation as she snuggled to rest. "Oh, this is perfectly wonderful," she murmured. "Why do people ever want to sleep on beds, I wonder?"

He stifled a retort. The prospect of horse stealing was far from soothing to his feelings. That she relied upon him with such implicit calm was flattering, but did not help matters.

"If you don't mind," she said politely, "I think I'll take a nap. I'm really rather tired."

"Of course you are," he agreed anxiously. "Go to sleep. I'll wake you when everything is ready."

She sighed contentedly, and her breathing settled to a regular, deep-drawn rhythm. The prospective horse thief settled himself more comfortably and possessed his soul in patience. Through the two end windows, high in the peaked roof, he could see the blue night sky with its sparkling stars. They companioned his chaotic thoughts—bewildered wonder at his own part in this mad adventure and troubled conjecture as to the very problematic future.

He heard his unwitting host enter the stable; heard him slip the bolts of the main door and go out by a side entrance in the adjoining cow barn, which he locked with care. The watcher in the loft drew a breath of relief. The possibility of being securely locked in for the night had been unpleasantly present in his mind.

Hours passed. At length, not daring to light a match, he felt his way down the ladder, located the driving horse, and backed him from his stall. He found a stable lantern by the simple process of stumbling over it, and

was forced to light it in order to harness the animal. Very carefully he drew the bolts and pushed the carriage out. He dreaded the necessary sounds of cramping and turning the vehicle, with a possibly unruly brute attached. He dragged the buggy to the road, returned for the horse, led him out, and completing the hitching process, tied him to the fence and returned. On his hands and knees, he crept along the little house porch and thrust a twenty-dollar bill under the front door. Pretty fair pay for one night's hire of a turnout, he thought, and, his conscience somewhat appeased, he sought the barn and tactfully aroused his companion. Her first words were unromantic to a degree, unfitting to their midnight expedition.

"Pie! I knew you'd bring it. You're a perfect dear!"

"There's no pie, and I'm not a perfect dear," he protested. "But I've stolen a horse and wagon for you, and we'd better use it, pronto."

He steadied her down the creaking stairs, led her past the silent house, and lifted her to the seat. A moment later they were clip-clopping down the road in the direction of the distant lights, now grown few and far between.

"I've been thinking things out, Perdita," said Langstaff, taking his courage in his hands and blushing under cover of the darkness. "This sort of thing can't go on, you know. We're bound to get into trouble soon or later. We're sure to be traced. I miss my guess if those Italians won't kidnap you, if they can—legally or otherwise. They must be wondering how much you may know of their extortion game. I haven't a claim on earth on you—nobody has—but they'll have one framed up. There's just one way I can protect you. Marry me!"

"Oh, goodness!" she gasped.

"I'm only suggesting it," he advanced

humblly, "on your account. Just as soon as you're safe and have found yourself, you can divorce me. There isn't anybody else in my case," he added. "I'm an orphan, and—and—no entanglements. It isn't as if I had to explain to any one, you know. It's really a very simple matter, though it sounds so—so extraordinary—and of course you know you can trust me."

She was silent. The horse jogged on with the precision of long-established habit; the scattered lights drew nearer. Langstaff's heart was thumping wildly.

"You're not offended?" he asked at length, when the silence became unendurable.

He felt her hand upon his arm, the brush of her cheek on his shoulder.

"Offended!" she echoed. "Why, I'm overcome with your goodness. You're the best, the most chivalrous, man in all the world! I—I'm honored that you offer me this. I can't explain—I can't tell you—" There were tears in her voice. "And I hope and pray I won't be too great a trouble and burden, and I wouldn't accept—truly I wouldn't—if I didn't feel 'way down inside of me that I'm really a nice sort of person. I want to tell you that. I'm sure—I know."

"Of course you are," he said warmly. "You are you, Perdita. It's I who am honored that you will accept my—my protection." He was startled to find the word "love" trembling on his lips.

The light of the first street lamp fell upon her upturned face. Her unearthly beauty held his eyes fascinated. How deep were those eyes that one divined sapphire blue even in the arc light's glare! How perfect the white chiseling of her features! His wife! The thought shot through him with a vivid pain and a wild ecstasy. He checked it. What right had he to careess that thought? She was a sacred trust to be guarded—a beautiful and holy trust,

a soul untrammeled given into his keeping. Another stretch of unlighted street hid her loveliness from him.

"And now," he said, "we're going to Bridgeport, and I'll telephone to Tel-mack to meet us there—to identify me, if necessary, and find a justice of the peace. I'm going to drive to the railway station and get our tickets and a time-table. Then"—he chuckled—"I'll find an all-night restaurant, and you shall have a pie."

She squeezed his arm and spoke in the smallest of whispers:

"Pie for our wedding breakfast!"

The unknown town they entered proved to be another mill center. They passed huge darkened buildings and crossed a self-important bridge. The horse plodded steadily on, taking his own direction, which eventuated in a dreary main street of closed stores and vacant moving-picture palaces. At the end of this unimposing avenue loomed the ornate stone railway station, its heavy bulk punctuated with light.

"Oh," exclaimed Perdita, with her persistent optimism, "it looks like a medieval palace, doesn't it? And think how warm it is in there, full of light—and pie!"

The horse slowed to a walk, picked his way across the street, and came to a standstill in front of a dour granite bank building.

"Thanks," said Langstaff. "Much obliged, old man. That's master's bank, is it? Well, I'll leave you here later. They know you, I guess."

He slapped the rein, and the horse reluctantly advanced, to draw up a moment later under the massive porte-cochère of the station. Langstaff, leaving Perdita in the buggy, entered the waiting room and looked about. A huge clock at the upper end of the room marked the hour—half past one. A row of framed time-tables hung along the wall beneath. At five of two the Boston train would be in. Langstaff

purchased two tickets for Bridgeport, retired into a booth, and called up Tel-mack at the office of the *Messenger*.

In a moment his friend's voice sounded over the wire. Cryptically Langstaff identified himself, though he was sure that Tel-mack would recognize his voice.

"This is Harkness," he said. "I want you to meet me at the Faming, Bridgeport, to-morrow—this morning, I mean—as early as you can. I'm to be married to Miss Trouvée—you remember Miss Trouvée?" An inarticulate mutter over the wire testified that Tel-mack did indeed remember Miss Trouvée. "You've lived in Bridgeport, so I count on you to find me a justice of the peace," Langstaff continued. "You understand? Good-by." He hung up with a sigh of relief.

The waiting room was empty save for a belated and dozing traveling salesman. Across the concourse, the doors of the lunch room stood open. Within, steaming samovars of tea and coffee sizzled quietly, and wrapped sandwiches lay trapped under glass covers—also pie. He gazed at the somnolent attendant with excited intentness. This was the setting, this the service, and these the viands, of his wedding breakfast! Dazed, he turned away, went out into the night, lifted his bride to the pavement, and, trusting to luck that the horse would "stand without hitching," conducted her within.

"Just a minute, Perdita," he said. "I want to leave our borrowed trap in front of the bank. Then I'll be with you." She glanced anxiously about her and down at her garments. "You'll do," he assured her. "You look astonishingly all right. It's that portière skirt that's most convincing."

He was gone but a scant five minutes, but it seemed an age. Apprehension seized him. Something—anything—might happen; he knew that now by experience. He ran back to the station

and, with unspeakable relief, beheld her, calm and matter of fact, sitting with folded hands and feet well tucked under in the remote corner he had selected. The sight of her filled him with happiness. There was nobody in the world like this lovely waif; who or what she had been mattered not at all. She was Perdita—the incomparable Perdita, the whimsical, humorous, courageous, optimistic spirit in the body of a lovely wraith.

She rose to meet him. There was trust and laughter and something enigmatic in her eyes as she raised them to his; but from her pale lips came a prosaic word: "Pie."

"On the arm of the groom," said he, meeting her mood, though his heart swelled.

She slipped her hand within the protecting circle he offered her, leaning upon it ever so slightly and humming the wedding march under her breath, as they crossed the deserted waiting room and scrambled on the high stools before the luncheon counter.

"It's perfectly ridiculous for a bride to be so hungry," she whispered as she demolished her third sandwich. "And don't you think my trousseau is *too* wonderful? 'Something old and something new, something borrowed and something blue,'" she repeated. "I've got everything. We ought to be very, very happy. But if any one tried to drink out of the bride's slipper—oh, my! Oh, there's the train!" she exclaimed, as a weary-voiced guard bawled his warning. "Now we begin our wedding journey. A little previous, but still it's a start. Come—my groom."

A disgruntled porter opened and unmade the section Langstaff had secured. He eyed the traveler with disfavor until soothed with a bill; then he retired to the end of the car.

Perdita leaned her head on her fiancé's shoulder with a placid assumption of proprietorship, and slept once more like a tired child.

Primrose dawn greeted them when they arrived at their destination. Stiff and weary-eyed, they settled themselves to wait in the station until the town should wake. Langstaff watched Perdita anxiously. It seemed hardly possible that this shadow of a girl should have been able to withstand the hardships she had undergone with such gaiety. She had come to him weak, hardly able to stand, shivering, and half starved, not two days before. But it was only her emaciation, he concluded, that gave her the appearance of fragility. The lines of her body were perfect, the proportions magnificent, with depth of chest and regal shoulders; and there was about her a self-confidence of movement, a breadth of gesture, that, like the ringing timbre of her voice, argued strength. Excitement seemed to feed her wasted energies. Now, after their flight and its consequent effort and anxiety, her cheeks were faintly pink. There was color in the lips that had been pale as ivory. She was silent, however, the gay humor of her sudden sallies was gone. In her eyes lurked the questioning gravity of one who looks into the future.

Langstaff's recollections of that morning always had the broken rapidity of a moving-picture film. How he met the myriad difficulties of the occasion always remained a mystery to him. But one little incident he recalled with photographic clearness, for it revealed to him to what romantic heights his love had soared. He came to the room he had secured for her at the hotel—the room in which she was to don the dress he had bought for her at a department store—and found her, not the Perdita that he knew, but a modern girl, with even a trace of style, in spite of her commonplace garments. He smiled and complimented her, feeling strange and embarrassed before this new Per-

dita. Then his eyes fell on the crumpled sheets of newspaper that had served their protecting purpose. They were still vaguely curved with the contour of her breast. They seemed to him something of her, something too intimate and personal to be thus abandoned, to be thrown out by some slatternly chambermaid. As Perdita turned toward the door, he hastily snatched up the papers, folded them roughly, and thrust them into his pocket—a souvenir of their mad adventurings.

Then came Telmack, and with trepidation they faced the license bureau—"Perdita Trouvée, foundling, of Paris, France, aged twenty-two, and Blair Langstaff, doctor of medicine, aged twenty-six," and so forth.

It was done; and Perdita was his wife. Then the train again; Telmack's farewells and good wishes, tempered, it must be owned, by obvious apprehensions and unvoiced anathemas against his friend's quixotic action.

Perdita had played her part in the events of the day with the silent precision of an automaton, but from time to time her slender hand had crept out to touch his sleeve, as if to make sure that he was there and real.

It was glorious mid-afternoon when they arrived in New York. The air was mild. March had decided to turn lamb at last. Langstaff secured a taxi, and together they toured the shops. He bought a fitted traveling case for the bride, and a Gladstone for his own use. Now she should have hats and gowns of her own choosing. He reveled in the delight of buying things for her. Each new extravagance was a new joy, and Perdita's taste was unerring. In her mysterious past she had surely never been denied luxuries or passed her days in any modest hamlet. With bags and baggage well filled, and countless bundles to be delivered, they turned toward their first home.

Langstaff had selected one of the

quietest and most exclusive hotels, where he registered Mr. and Mrs. Blair Langstaff, Boston, with a conscious flourish, and secured a suite that provided them with their own apartments and the common ground of a sitting room. Still in the golden daze of their mad day, he followed the bell boy, nodded acceptance of the sumptuous rooms, disposed of the bags, dismissed the attendant, and, with a suffocating feeling of complete nightmare, turned to Perdita.

She was standing timidly by the door of her room, her eyes fixed on her shining new shoes, while she nervously pulled at the white kid of her just-purchased gloves.

"Go rest, dear." The affectionate term fell unconsciously from his lips. Then he hated himself for what he felt she must resent.

"Yes, thank you, Blair," she said. Her voice made a caress of his name, and he started, embarrassed and deeply moved. "I want to say," she whispered, "that it's been a—a very wonderful day. I want to say—I'm the luckiest girl in the world. I want to say," she finished lamely, "thank you."

She was gone. The communicating door closed with a click of finality, and Blair stood alone in the elaborate sitting room. He whistled and ran his fingers through his hair.

Bundles began to arrive. The prodigal bridegroom was kept busy receiving his purchases. He piled the boxes before her door, announced their arrival, and finally retired to his own room. His overcoat, crumpled and muddy, lay across the footboard of his bed. From its pocket bulged the four-day-old paper he had thrust there in the hotel at Bridgeport, the paper that had lain over her heart, the paper he had once thrown down in boredom because it contained nothing of interest. He had maligned the world as a cruel, weary bore, a drab universe, an unrelieved treadmill—and

then! He saw himself standing in his narrow hall, one hand outstretched to turn off the electric light; he heard again that muffled cry in the night, the fall of her spent body against his door. And now she was his wife, though he had promised to let her go whenever she willed. How could he let her go? How could he live without her—go back to the drab universe and the treadmill again? And yet he was in honor bound not even to hold her hand a moment longer than friendship warranted, not even to kiss the color to those pale lips that had now begun to glow.

He walked to the window, threw it open, and looked down at the city below. Houses and houses, and spires and towers that flamed with the unrest of myriad lights. He looked up to the stars and prayed for strength to be Don Quixote to the last, never to hurt her perfect trust by the smallest word or deed. To change the current of his thoughts, he began to plan for her. She had paid him the infinite compliment of calling this "a wonderful day". He wanted her to end it happily. He conjured up a dozen menus for their dinner; he made as many plans for the evening and dismissed them all. She must be taken care of in cotton wool. She must be nursed back to health. He would order the simplest and best of little dinners served in the sitting room. Then he chided himself for a fool. Under the circumstances, to dine tête-à-tête was out of the question. She would be freer and happier in the crowded dining room, where the intimacy of a marriage would not be hinted at.

He was roused by her voice calling him and leaped to her bidding. She stood awaiting him, standing under the full light of the overhead electrics, gowned in an evening frock she had fancied that afternoon. She was transformed again. She had become a startlingly beautiful woman of the world, wholly at ease in her décolleté,

carrying the somewhat eccentric style with unconscious grace.

"You like me?" she asked shyly.

"I love you," he wanted to answer, but he choked back the words. "It becomes you wonderfully, Perdita. But your cavalier has no evening clothes."

"Oh," she flushed, "I forgot—I just thought—for dinner, you know — How stupid of me! I'll be ready in just a minute. I—I just wanted to look especially nice just for you, because you've been kind enough to marry me. I wanted you to be proud of me a little."

"No, no," he begged. "Don't change. I like you in this. We'll go to some little place where it won't matter if I'm—not in your class. Put on your hat—the one I picked out—the big one—and wrap up well."

They dined on sumptuously simple morsels. They laughed over their past adventures, and made light of their fears. They played with conjectures as to her identity. She mourned her name of Mademoiselle Trouvée; then penitently declared Perdita Langstaff a name of sheer romance. But he must not let her linger. She was to take an extra long night of refreshing sleep. She must not forget that she was still under the doctor's care. So they drove up brilliantly lighted Broadway in happy, intimate chat, both a little embarrassed, both a little overanxious to cover the embarrassment.

"I forgot something," he exclaimed suddenly, and gave an order to the chauffeur.

A block farther on they drew up before the glittering display of a jeweler's window.

"It's something very important," he said, as he assisted her to the pavement and, drawing her arm through his, led her into the shop. "Fourth finger of your left hand, please." He turned to the clerk. "Fit that with a wedding ring."

The clerk fitted the finger with a white metal circlet from an assortment of various sizes strung together, absented himself a moment, and returned with a plain gold band, which he handed Langstaff, divining, perhaps, a sentimental desire on the part of his patron to place the golden badge of wifehood on the transparent hand extended on the black exhibition velvet. Langstaff gently slipped the ring on her finger.

Suddenly her hand stiffened convulsively. He glanced at her face. It was stony with horror; her distended eyes were fixed in terror on the ring. Langstaff tossed a bill to the astonished jeweler and assisted his "wife" to the waiting taxi, ordered all haste to their hotel, and closed the door.

"What is it? What is it?" he begged in anguish. "I should have forced you to rest. I shouldn't have let you overtax your strength. There, we'll be home in a jiffy. Try not to give way." She was shivering and her breath came in heavy sobs. She tried to speak and could not. "Don't talk—relax, relax — See, we're almost there. You're overtired. You're nervously exhausted."

She lay against his shoulder and sobbed hysterically. Half mad with anxiety, he at last got her to the parlor of their suite. She broke from him with a cry of despair and flung herself face downward on the lounge. He knelt by her side in frantic misery, mixing self-accusations and promises of bromides in one breath.

"Oh," she cried, articulate at last, "it's awful! I'm married! I'm married!"

"I know, I know," he soothed. "But you can get rid of me just as soon as you're in safe hands."

"No, no!" she wailed. "I mean before—before—I remember—I used to wear one—a wedding ring. I remembered the minute you put it on. It's horrible! Oh, save me, Blair! I

don't want to remember! I don't want to find a horrid, strange husband I don't know! I can't! I won't! I won't go back to him! I don't want him! I only want you, Blair! I only want you!" She threw both her arms about his neck in a paroxysm of weeping.

Langstaff was stunned. He could have died of joy, there in her arms, with the knowledge that she cared for him. He tried to still his surging happiness with the thought that her dependence and isolation of mind alone were responsible for her love. But she was married, married to some unknown man, somewhere in a forgotten world. Now they were bigamists.

He held her to him, and his words rushed from his heart:

"You shall be free, my darling, I promise you. You're not his. You've been dead and you've come to life for me. We'll find him. We'll make it clear. I won't give you up. You were sent to me—to me—out of all the world. I loved you even when I thought you mad, in that first minute you called to me. I loved you when I washed your poor bleeding feet that had brought you to me. I have loved the other you—my playmate and my comrade. Oh, Perdita, you're mine—even your name is mine!"

She stilled her weeping and raised her head.

"I'm going to believe you," she said. "But we've simply got to find me. It's the only way." She disengaged herself gently from his embrace and rose slowly to her feet. "Please kiss me good night," she said, and lifted her tear-stained face.

He kissed her, held her cheek for a moment to his own. Then he led her to the door of her apartment.

"We will find you, Perdita, never fear," he said. "Good night." He sat long lost in thought; then, with set lips, he crossed to the divan and kissed

the crushed cushion where her tear-wet face had lain.

Fate not infrequently decrees that we shall flee the thing we once pursued, and pursue that from which we sought to escape. It dawned upon Langstaff in the still watches of the night that the persons he most desired to meet at that moment were Salviootti and his Mephistophelian cousin, for they alone held the key to Perdita's lost self, and Perdita's lost self was become almost as important as Perdita. To meet the Italians on their own territory was out of the question. However, Salviootti, who would stop at nothing in his own stronghold, might be terrorized if caught away from his base of power. Without a doubt the extortions were hot on his trail, but it was also conceivable that the quarry had actually given the hunters the slip. In that case the hunters must be allowed to catch up, and that as quickly as possible. The simplest method was obviously the best.

Langstaff got Telmack on the long-distance wire and suggested that the *Messenger* announce his marriage and present whereabouts immediately.

Telmack demurred. He did not believe in courting trouble. Langstaff insisted, and Telmack consented to flare headlines, for the doctor's disappearance had caused comment and conjecture in the whole town. There was no danger that the Colony would remain in ignorance, and the hour of Salviootti's arrival in New York could be calculated almost to a minute. Yes, he was still in Newtonport Mills, but the cousin was gone, no one seemed to know where. No report of the burned barn and the incinerated motor had come in, but the Claxton local paper had an account of the astonishing levitation of a certain Marcelus Hyam's horse and buggy.

Morning found Langstaff alert and hopeful. He had thought out the plans for his trap to the last detail. But

the situation as personified in his wife gave him embarrassed concern. Should he breakfast alone in the café, or ought he to invite Perdita to join him in their sitting room?

Perdita saved him further question by appearing gowned in a new street dress, smiling and apparently unconscious of her outburst of the night before.

"Pie for breakfast?" suggested Langstaff.

"Eggs!" she exclaimed. "Oceans of eggs!" To have heard her one would have thought her mind free from every question save that of food. "I'm so hungry—as usual. If I don't watch out, I shall become fat, hugely fat. But then you're a doctor; you'll have to see to that. You're used to responsibility, anyway."

They breakfasted as playfully as two children, as foolishly as two lovers, and as innocently as a couple of kittens.

"And now," he said, "I'm off." She looked up at him gravely, with disappointment written large in her blue eyes. "I've a plan, Perdita, a plan to find you. You'll find yourself, of course, in a very little while, but if I can get the threads of your past into my hands, we'll disentangle them the sooner." He raised her left hand and fingered the bright new wedding ring. "I want that ring there, Perdita, with no 'ifs' and 'buts' about—only your initials and mine. So you won't mind if I seem neglectful?"

She gazed at him, wistfulness and mirth in her glance.

"Good hunting," she wished him; then, extending her left hand straight before her over the coffee cups, she frowned at it. "I wonder," she murmured. With one of her lightning changes of mood, she sprang to her feet, put both hands on his shoulders, and kissed him. "I know this," she said, "whoever he was, I never loved him a little bit—never—never! I've

never felt this way before. I'll wait—forever for you."

From the hotel lobby Langstaff sent his wife a clean sweep of the news and florist stands and, having drawn the house detective aside, was directed to an agency of national repute. In the office of the detective bureau, which was large and luxurious, he was introduced to a benign-looking man who greeted his opening statement, "I want you to ascertain who my wife is," with a nod of casual unconcern; evidently it was not unusual for gentlemen to make post-matrimonial researches. But as Langstaff progressed with his story, the benign chief slued his swivel chair completely around, and his cherubic face assumed the blankness of incredulity.

"My dear young man," he remarked as Langstaff's recital closed, "it's tommyrot! It's a plant to fleece you some way—that's plain. This girl got you—" He never finished the sentence; he was enough of a character reader to realize when to stop.

"It's a case of amnesia," said Langstaff slowly. "I think I told you I was a physician."

The chief nodded, shrugging his huge shoulders.

"You wait till this husband of hers shows up. It's a new form of badger, that's what it is."

"Very well," Langstaff agreed. "Think what you blanked well pleased. All I want of you is a couple—better make it three—first-class men who will do as I say."

"That's easy," said the big man. "I'll let you have Mercito and Galli. They're strong on the wop stuff."

"Italians?" snapped Langstaff. "They're just what I don't want. Give me Irish. I want men who won't hesitate to go into a mix-up if we've got to have one. I want men who couldn't have an Italian superstition in their hides, and I'm willing to pay."

"Oh, very well, have it your own way," grunted the chief, and punched the desk bell with a huge, square-tipped finger. To the ferret-faced boy who answered the summons, he snapped three names, "Martin, Doyle, and Graham." The ferret face was withdrawn, and a moment later an inconspicuous man of a general brown tone entered and stood at respectful attention. "This gent will wise you to what he wants," said the chief. "Take him into the inner office. Then go round up Graham and Doyle and tell 'em what they're to do."

The inconspicuous man nodded, looked Langstaff over, and jerked his head in the direction of a glass-paneled door. Langstaff followed his sleuth into a small empty room, sat down on one of the two uncomfortable chairs, and told his tale anew.

"Um," said the detective, "that's a rum one. All the same, I think you've got the right dope. The old man in there has chased so many mare's-nests he wouldn't know a colt when he saw one. But I've worked in New England mill towns, and believe me—they go some!" He chuckled reminiscently. "Now I'll wise the other boys up to the descriptions, and I'll hire the premises myself. I know right now just the dump you need, and the owners know us, so they'll let us in, all right. Then I'll call you at the hotel, when I know they're watchin' you, and give you the address of the joint. Keep the lady indoors, see—and lock the door."

He rose, engulfed a large chew of gum which he withdrew from an inner pocket, and ushered out his employer by another door leading into the hall.

Langstaff turned toward his hotel in high glee. His plans simply could not fail, and once the extortioners were well terrified, he had no doubt that they would gladly purchase his silence with the revelation of Perdita's past. Whatever that might be, it would at least

be fact, and facts could be adjusted to meet facts. The only concrete thing in the world was Perdita herself, and surely no husband would want to lay claim to a wife who had no recollection of him, and didn't want him.

But suppose she should remember her husband and love him? Suppose he, Langstaff, should be the dream, forgotten? Every moment of the day Perdita was remembering more of herself; not events of her past life, but peculiarities of personality—her preference for blue, her passion for gardenias, her hatred of discordant noises, the thousand and one likes and dislikes that were part of her. And, as all these characteristics seemed to draw to her like particles of steel to a magnet, she became more vivid, more fascinating, more alluring.

Each suggestion came necessarily from without—from things heard and seen. She recognized her desires and preferences like old friends, with little cries of joy: "Oh, blue! How beautiful! I always loved blue. I wore it always—all sorts of blues! A gardenia! Oh, look! I know its name, and I know just how it smells. Do buy me a bunch, a big bunch—lots and lots of gardenias!"

With a pang Langstaff recalled each incident. Might not a face in the crowd recall her husband suddenly to her mind? Might she not greet him with delight?

He knocked at their sitting-room door—the four knocks of their signal—with his heart eaten with fear that something might already have happened to bring the past to her and to estrange them, perhaps forever.

Her greeting sent him to the seventh heaven.

"My dear, you've been gone years! I've been lost—worse lost than ever without you. I'm only Perdita when you're away. Tell me everything."

With her hand in his, he detailed his plans, while she nodded approval.

"Of course, of course."

"It won't be long to wait. Salviotti"—she shuddered at the name—"will take the first train, three hours to New York. He's sure to have seen the paper early."

"Why," she exclaimed, her eyes dilating, "he must be here now! They've got to find out what it all means and what you intend to do." The telephone bell rang shrilly. "There!" she gasped, and rose to her feet.

Langstaff crossed to the receiver.

"Martin—yes." He listened attentively, placed his hand over the cup, and turned to Perdita. "This is one of the detectives. He says his men have located Salviotti. He came in on the eleven-thirty-seven, and was met by Dario, the tall man. They shadowed him to Cammiotti's headquarters—one of the biggest Black Handers unhung. They're there now, but they'll move soon. Martin says you will have to be the bait. They'll follow you if you go out. I'm only the secondary consideration. We've got to lure them to the place we want them to go to. Perdita, are you able to do this? I don't want to bring you into it, but Martin insists."

Perdita's nervousness had passed from her.

"I don't mind at all," she answered calmly. "I only mind waiting."

"Just as soon as they're positive that we're being watched, we go out together direct to the house."

She stood up straight and capable. Her eyes shone, her cheeks glowed.

Langstaff nodded and turned to the phone.

"All right, Martin, she's game. Tip us off when you're sure they're watching for us. You've arranged about the house? Give me the address—wait till I write it—East Forty-sixth Street—all right. Get a couple of packing

boxes in the area and some excelsior, as if furniture were going in— You have? Good—all right." He hung up and turned toward Perdita. "Action is certainly your tonic," he said. "You bloom under it. I couldn't have believed it."

She looked at him with puzzled eyes. "I've felt this way lots and lots of times—I can't remember how or when—agonized waiting, and then having to do things, and everything becoming clear and precise—panic first, and then everything perfectly simple. I feel I am going to enjoy going into action. Isn't it queer?"

"Oh, Perdita," he said, and the words choked him, "if you are going to find yourself—what is it going to mean to you and me?"

She nodded her head with decision.

"It's going to mean what I'll *make* it mean. I tell you there are lots and lots of things I know without knowing why I know them, and I know I never loved any one but you. It's got to come out right. Why, look how I adopted you."

"I know," he admitted, "but you didn't know any one else, and you don't know any one now."

"I don't care," she insisted. "I've known lots of people, and there never was one like you—never. I know them all deep, deep down in the back of my head, even if I can't bring them out. It doesn't mean I haven't known them—don't you see?"

But he didn't see. He was filled with fear that the past would take her from him, and try as she would, while they waited for the summons, she could not divert him from gloomy forebodings.

At last the telephone called. It was Doyle on the wire. Salviotti and the tall man, he informed Langstaff, were in a saloon on Sixth Avenue, awaiting information. One of Cammiotti's men, a friend of the second chef's, was even now in the hotel negotiating for news.

If Mr. and Mrs. Langstaff would show themselves for a few moments in the corridor and take plenty of time securing a taxi at the door, pursuit was assured.

Langstaff objected. He wanted no pursuit by hired villains; he wanted only Salviotti and his confederate to fall into the trap. Doyle was impatient. Let the starter have the address; the starter, too, was Italian and a friend of the deputy watcher's. His information once passed along, what so inevitable as the advent of the two men most concerned? It was too easy.

Langstaff grumbled an assent.

Together, he and Perdita descended to the lobby, wasted ample time in aimless wandering about, sauntered to the cab stand and ordered a taxi, gave the address in East Forty-sixth Street, and waited a moment while Langstaff set his watch by the starter's time ere they rolled away from the ornate doorway.

At length they drew up before a small remodeled house, just such a house as a bridal couple might select. On one side gaped a vacant space, where painted boards announced the approaching erection of an apartment house; on the other, was a dwelling with a "For Rent" sign conspicuously displayed. Newly opened boxes littered the sidewalk, and a trail of excelsior led to the area gate. The effect of present occupancy was convincing. As they alighted, a rough-necked individual, presumably the caretaker, touched his battered derby and preceded them up the steps, keys in hand. As he let them into the brightly tinted, fresh-paint-smelling hall, he addressed Langstaff.

"If they fall fer it, you can third degree 'em in here and nobody nowhere won't know nothin'."

Langstaff nodded. Martin had followed his directions with admirable perfection of detail. The detective led them to the dining-room door and

waved his hand at a telephone in the pantry.

"All connected," he announced triumphantly. "The painters is just outer here, and the boss hadn't had it cut out yet. Martin will call you when they head this way. But they've got to think she's alone, if you want to get 'em in." He jerked his head toward Perdita. "I gotter go loaf along to the suds store couple of avenues over. You, sir, gotter go out—see?" He led them to the windows opening on the back yard and pointed. "Ye see this new building that's comin' up alongside here? It's goin' to build around the corner house and come out on the avenue with a twenty-five-foot front. They're pullin' the avenue house down now. Well, you go round there and tell the foreman of the wreckin' gang that Martin says to let you through—see? Around you walk and come right in here by the back door—and so do I—and so does Graham. It's the easiest plant I ever saw."

"Splendid!" said Perdita admiringly. "I do hope they come soon."

Doyle looked at her approvingly.

"Ain't scared a little bit—no, I guess not! But you won't be alone any time at all, lady. I'll be in by the back way by the time the boss, here, goes out. They'll come in by the area door; that'll be wide open, askin' for 'em. They couldn't get through by the wreckin' company's dump—wouldn't be let."

"See here," said Langstaff thoughtfully, "suppose they *don't* come in? Suppose they think they'd better wait for a better time?"

The detective shook his head.

"No, they'll try it. I guess them high-class dagos always work with a taxi or a car. They'll have one trailin'. Betcha they have it drawn up out in front of the next house. And wouldn't they think to gag her and stuff her into one of them goods crates and take it up in front with 'em? Sure they would.

That's right in line with the sort of game they're used to playin'. This Salviotti of yours is in with the Cammiotti crowd. You wait—me and Martin doped it all out. Why, we left a bunch of sackin' right in plain sight in the basement window, convenient to cover her up with. Think they won't follow up? Why, it's as sure as findin' spaghetti in a wop's kitchen. We'll bait 'em in all right, all right.

"Look." He turned toward the front of the house and stood gesticulating in the window as if explaining something concerning the entrance way to the new tenants. "There's one of 'em now. See that chauffeur fussin' with a monkey wrench across the way? Bet anythin' that's the guy who drives their trailer. He's lookin' for the exact spot to line it up, in case they need it for a get-away. Good-lookin' chap, too. There goes the phone." He turned away, followed by Langstaff. "Better hang around the window," he called over his shoulder to Perdita, "as if you were lookin' over the shutters. Let him have a good slant at you. The surer they are that you're here, and here alone when we go out, the better."

Obediently Perdita proceeded to examine the window casings, with all the air of an absorbed housewife, trying the locks and catches; then turned back into the room as Langstaff's step sounded on the bare floors.

"Martin says Salviotti and Dario are sitting in a taxi right around the corner. Doyle's right. I guess that's their confederate across the street. It's time you went, Doyle. When I see you come across the back lot, I'll go out the front way."

The detective grinned assent.

"We hold the meetin' in the second floor; I'll be in the corner closet. After your husband leaves, missus, go on up and be busy in the washroom, fussin' with the taps. Graham will be in the front-room closet, and we'll have 'em

between us, with the others comin' along behind. So long."

He let himself out of the front door, sauntered down the steps, cast a bleary eye at the area door, went below and slammed it noisily, and turned away whistling, as it jarred invitingly open again behind him. He walked off down the street in the direction of Third Avenue, dropped into the first saloon on the way, winked at the barkeeper, went through the swing door to the back room, thence to an alley, and, a moment later, his shoulders and shoes whitened with lime, a lime-streaked hat pulled over his eyes, he was retracing his steps on the parallel street toward the dusty activities of the demolition company. He ducked his forelock to the foreman by the brick chute, passed through the dismantled door and out again into the littered yards, and so entered the back gate of his destination.

Langstaff, watching from the second-story window, saw him coming.

"Be brave, Perdita," he said softly, as he kissed her forehead, where the crisp, strangely red tresses met the whiteness of her brow. "The showdown is coming. Good-by."

He ran down the stairs to the door, bounded down the steps, looked about, saw the waiting chauffeur, and accosted him.

"Where's a telephone booth around here?" he inquired hurriedly, and before the man could answer, "Want a decent place. Got about a thousand calls. What's the nearest hotel?"

The Italian looked confused, but suggested the Ritz.

"Oh, sure!" said Langstaff. "Get a good cocktail there, too," and started off in a rapid swing.

Was he followed? He walked three blocks and darted into a tobacconist's, bought some cigarettes, and waited. Three schoolgirls and an octogenarian passed the door. As he emerged, he

scanned the avenue. He crossed again, doubled back on the next street, and, walking close to the house side of the way, turned into Park and Lexington, working his way back. At the chute the foreman stopped him, but Martin's name opened the way. He made the house gate and hurried silently up the basement stairs.

The sound of voices above caused him to rush the next flight. The door to the front room stood open. He sprang in and beheld Salviotti, his pale face waxen yellow with fear, pinned to the wall by a revolver in Martin's hand. Lying on the floor was the body of a tall, lean man, a North Italian by every indication. In a corner a third, a sullen-faced Sicilian, crouched, watching the door with beady eyes, but held in check by Doyle, who was sniggering wickedly.

Langstaff saw it all in a flash, but his eyes sought Perdita. She was standing coolly before Salviotti, examining him with the intense inquisitiveness of a savant before a new specimen of beetle. She turned a radiant face to Langstaff.

"Now that I see him again," she announced delightedly, "I remember lots and lots of things about him. About that one, too—the tall man—and about Mina, the old woman. No wonder I was so afraid of them! I remember awful things they talked about."

Langstaff walked close to Salviotti, whose pouchy eyes took on new fury at sight of him, while his loose lips let slip quick, comprehensive curses in English and Italian.

"Shut up!" said Langstaff. "I've got an offer to make you. You know I've got it on you for more things than this extortion business. I'm not in the mills any more. Bouton and the Newington police can't shut me off if I start things now. Besides that, this young lady can make some pretty startling statements." Salviotti's flow of language ceased abruptly. "But," and

Langstaff spoke deliberately, with many dramatic pauses to let his words sink in, "if you'll come across with the truth—the whole of it—as concerns this lady, I'll agree to let bygones be bygones. She agrees to forget what she learned in your thieves' den."

Salviotti eyed his inquisitor doubtfully.

"If I tell you all I know, you let me go?"

"Yes," said Langstaff. "I'll let you go back to the Colony, and you'd better never leave it," he added.

"I will tell all I know. On the mantle of the Madonna, I swear it."

"All right, Martin, you can take that gun away from his stomach," ordered Langstaff. "Keep him covered—that's all—and watch that beggar on the floor. He's coming to. Now"—he turned again to Salviotti, who sighed with relief as the menacing pressure of the blue gun barrel was removed from his vitals—"who is this lady?"

Perdita, breathless, leaned forward, her hands clasping and unclasping.

Salviotti glanced from one to the other with evil triumph.

"I don't know," he snarled.

Perdita gave a little cry and leaned against the wall for support. Langstaff took a step back, and his face darkened with anger.

"You'd better not play with me, Salviotti," he threatened. "One word and you go to jail, and I'll see that no pull gets you out. Two can play at that game. I've offered you your freedom—buy it. Who is this lady?"

The Italian's leering lips tightened.

"I tell you I don't know. You offer to let me go if I tell you all I know. I agree. I do *not* know who she is." His voice carried conviction.

"You swore," said Langstaff, controlling himself with difficulty, "that she was the half-witted daughter of your cousin."

"It was a lie," admitted Salviotti im-

perturbably. "I used an old birth certificate of my brother-in-law's first wife's girl, Madalina. It was necessary to have legal claim."

"How did you get hold of her?" the doctor questioned.

Salviotti jerked his thumb at the prostrate man, who was now stirring feebly.

"He brought her. He had been from Italy perhaps two months. He called her '*La Morta*,' because she was as one dead. He is a vaudeville artist, ventriloquist, and magician, Carlo Dario. It was he who hit upon giving the spiritist messages."

"By which you profited so shamefully," Langstaff snapped.

Salviotti shrugged his heavy shoulders and glanced longingly at the open door to the hall. He was anxious only to escape; details did not matter.

"By which we profited—yes, or why give the séances? Dario first worked in Newark, but there the people got so frightened, many confessed to the priests, and things got too hot. Some of my friends here sent him to me. We did well in the Colony," he remarked regretfully.

"But why did you dye my hair?"

It was Perdita's voice. Her perfectly feminine question eased the tension. Even the matter-of-fact Martin chuckled audibly. Salviotti looked at her with appraising eyes; he seemed hardly able to understand that this modern young woman was the waxen sleeper, the helpless piece of living mechanism, he had known.

"It was for the artistic effect," he admitted. "That was my idea. It was more startling to look at against the white satin, and the more unnatural and strange you looked, the better for us. Dario wanted to bleach it yellow, but I said no; with red you get the strange look without it being like a wig."

Perdita put her hand under her smart hat.

"Thank goodness for that!" she murmured.

Langstaff's impatience brought them back to the material question.

"Where did Dario find her?" he demanded.

"Of that *he* will tell you," said Salviotti. "That is for him to answer. Can I go now?"

"Not on your life!" growled Martin. "Sit over there beside that other Black Hander till we get through. Now, you, Dario, are you all there?"

The lean Mephistopheles had raised himself to a sitting position. His mouth slowly opened, and his eyes fixed themselves on Perdita with a look of terrified awe. He gasped and crossed himself.

"*Dio mio!*" he whispered. "*Dio mio!*"

"Get down to cases," growled Martin, poking him with the revolver barrel. "Know that lady?"

The Italian nodded and burst into a stream of exclamations.

"Who is she?" Langstaff's voice was pleading.

"Who am I? Please, oh, please!" Perdita leaned close.

Dario laughed hysterically, rocking to and fro on the floor.

"I don't know," he hiccuped.

"Come here," ordered the detective. "You, Salviotti, this wop hasn't much English. You interpret, and do it right—see?"

"Why for not? There is no use to lie now," growled the fat padrone. "He told me he find her on his brother's ship, the *Stella Marina*, off the Azores on January 3d. She was tied to pieces of wreckage; they pick her up. She was like as I told—alive, but like dead all the time. She had been hit on the head; her face was all bruised." Dario nodded violent affirmation of Salviotti's story.

"But what ship was lost?"

"Who knows?" shrugged the interpreter. "How many ships have been lost since this war began? How many cargoes have exploded? How many secret enemies are on the sea? Sometimes for patriotism, sometimes for revenge, sometimes for vendetta, is a ship killed. Who knows how this one went down? Dario has told me that *La Morta* was lashed to a wooden hatch grating—there you have it. Some small ship of the old type, but which—who knows? Again I ask, who knows? She was dressed in a silk night robe and a silk dressing gown over that. But what does that tell? If the lady cannot remember herself, who shall tell her? Not I."

Perdita's lips were trembling, and tears of disappointment rose unquenched to her eyes, but she held her grief in check. She addressed the man in Italian.

"Tell me—what—what rings were upon my hands?"

"Three large pearls in a row," he answered, "a large square sapphire with little diamonds, a sapphire and a pearl together, and a plain gold wedding ring."

"Oh!" gasped Perdita, and her face had grown ivory white. "A—a wedding ring!" She raised her handkerchief to hide the quiver of her lips. "Where are they?" she asked at length.

"My brother, the captain, took them," Dario replied. "Heaven alone knows who has them now, but doubtless the stones are sold and the settings melted."

"There was a wedding ring on my hand when they found me," she said to Langstaff. "Oh, if I'd only just come out of the sea, with nothing at all of anything beyond! If I'd been just a sea child!"

Langstaff put a soothing hand on her arm.

"We've traced you to the Azores," he said in a tone he strove to make

cheerful. "Now, Dario, I want a written statement of everything—the date, the place where the wreckage was found, the name of your ship, your brother's name. Describe those rings, describe what she was dressed in. Tell how you managed to get her landed in America without the knowledge of the authorities, where you went first—the whole story. It's that or jail!" he rapped out, as he saw signs of refusal in Dario's sunken eyes. "I thought I might want a deposition, so I came provided." He drew a fountain pen and a pad from his pocket and handed them to Dario. "You can write it in Italian," he added. "The lady will vise the statement. And make haste. Your chauffeur is getting impatient."

Perdita turned and walked into the adjoining room. She was crying softly; a wave of weakness had drowned her will. Langstaff followed her, slipping his arm through hers. Thus they stood during long minutes, looking out unseeing through the blank square of the uncurtained windows. He said nothing, but his very presence was comfort and hope. Gradually her sobbing ceased. She leaned her head for an instant against his shoulder, gave a little shudder, and turned, mistress of herself, to Martin, as he handed her the scrambled sheets of Dario's statement. She read it through and translated its contents. Signed and witnessed by Salviotti, Dario, and the three detectives, the document was dated and turned over to Langstaff.

"See 'em out, will you?" Blair ordered the detectives. "See 'em out and into their barouche, and well out of sight." He turned to the two conspirators. "And you, Salviotti, and you, Dario, I've promised you I'd say nothing, and I'll keep my word. As for these men here, they're in my employ, and after they leave my service, you're no concern of theirs. But understand once and for all, this lady is

now my wife. Incidentally, she is of no further use to you. You are to forget us as completely as we are to forget you—unless it should become necessary, for purposes of identification, that your stories be repeated. Then the whole ship's company of the *Stella Marina* will have to come across, or all bets are off and I start prosecution. Now you can go."

"Si, signor," Dario agreed hastily, and followed by Salviotti and the Sicilian confederate, who had not uttered a word, descended to the street, followed by the three detectives. There followed the slam of a taxi door, the buzzing of a motor. The hall door re-opened, and Martin's voice called:

"All clear. I gotter lock up here, if you don't mind."

A moment later they stood in the street before the house of adventure and failure.

"Better drop in at the office and see the chief," Martin suggested.

Langstaff slipped him a yellow bill.

"Split that with the others," he said, "and this one's yours. You did it right, and you did it quick. It's no fault of yours if the trail ends in the ocean."

"Hard luck, sir," the detective agreed. "Sorry, lady. You got the jinx, sure. Better luck next time."

She bowed a disheartened dismissal and turned away.

"I'll call a cab," said Langstaff solicitously. "You must be a nervous wreck. I am, I know. You must go home and rest."

"I'd like to walk a little, if you don't mind," she begged in a very small voice. "The awful shut-up air and turpentine and things in that house have made my head ache. I want some real air. After all"—she rallied with her old joyous optimism—"we're no worse off than we were before, are we? I've only just landed in the water, that's all—and—I feel things about that, things coming back to me now that I've learned about

being picked up at sea. I can remember that I used to have a blue silk kimono with pink wistaria embroidered on it. I can remember being on a ship. I don't know whether it's the *Stella Marina* or the one I was on before, the one that was lost. But you see it will all help, and wasn't it exciting while it lasted?" Her cheeks had regained their color, and the old sparkle awoke anew in her eyes. "Isn't it perfectly ridiculous when you think of it?" she laughed. "Here I am pursuing myself." Then, becoming suddenly serious, she added, "I know it's given you a lot of trouble, and it must have been awfully expensive. I hope you could afford it."

"Oh, that's all right," he reassured her. "I'm no pauper, and besides, as you say, it was worth it—in excitement. What a funny girl you are!" he exploded, after a moment's rumination. "I'll never get used to you. Just when I'm ready to meet your tears, I find you laughing."

"But you don't find me in tears when you expect me to laugh, do you?" she asked. "Because that would be awful. I'm not very good on tears except when they aren't real; then I can be very emotional. I have a feeling that I could be quite a tragedienne." Again they pursued their way in silence. "I'll tell you what we'll do," she brought out excitedly. "We'll find out what ships sailed from everywhere that could have been near the Azores at that date. Then perhaps I could pick out the name. Why, after all, we're a whole lot nearer me than we were."

They had reached Fifth Avenue and turned north. Perdita, from the depths of her disappointment, had, with characteristic resilience, rebounded to high hopefulness and effervescence of spirit. She inhaled the sweet spring air with rapture, and announced that, as nothing further could be done for the moment, she refused to worry. *That*, after all,

was Langstaff's selected business. Thereupon, she flew into ecstasies of admiration over every show window, the florists' displays, the glittering stream of motors in the thoroughfare, the lordly haughtiness of the traffic policemen, the quarreling sparrows, anything and everything. She even expatiated in glowing language over the geraniums in an itinerant flower seller's cart.

"It's really, truly spring!" she insisted. "Flower carts in the street, and red-and-white-striped awnings! They're spring's only invariable and true followers everywhere all over the world."

Langstaff laughed.

"It's quite true," he agreed. "But in New York there is one necessary accompaniment—the hurdy-gurdy."

"Hurdy-gurdy?" wondered Perdita. "That's one of the things I haven't remembered yet. I do hope we'll find one soon. Everything else says it's spring. Let's find a hurdy-gurdy."

"It's too late to-day," objected Langstaff. "They'll be trundling home to the slums by now. We'll go hurdy-gurdy hunting to-morrow, first thing in the morning. Now it's rest, and then we'll dine somewhere. After that, I'll let you rest again while I go after a friend of mine who can, I think, tell me how to go about tracing all the ships that might have been near the Azores on January 3d."

"Oh," cried Perdita, "take me along. I don't want you to neglect me like that. I want to be with you. Just suppose we *did*—find my husband; then we couldn't run around together until I explained things to him. It wouldn't be nice. But now we can, because I don't know anybody else but you and those detectives and Italians, and nobody could expect me to follow them up, now could they?"

"We've been spared your husband so far, Perdita," exclaimed the groom

testily. "For Heaven's sake, don't drag him in now."

"But I wasn't," she defended. "It's you. You want to go off and leave me all by myself with the thought of him. I don't care *where* you're going, I'm going, too. I won't be left alone with my husband. I hate him! I hate him!"

"You don't hate him half as much as *I* do," growled Langstaff. "What do you suppose he looks like? I wish I could make a mental picture of him I could tack my hatred on."

Perdita looked at him through her lashes.

"Well," she said judicially, "he must be awfully good looking, because I'm certain I couldn't stand any one around who wasn't, and, after all, you have to have *any* sort of a husband around a lot, don't you? He must be very tall, and awfully strong; I despise a weak little man. And I'm quite sure he must have been awfully good to me, because I'm sure I should have killed him if he hadn't been. And of course he's rich, or my tastes wouldn't be so awfully extravagant—and *you* know how extravagant I am."

The groom pro tem did not relish the description.

"I don't believe it," he growled. "It's you that are rich. You're an heiress—he's a fortune hunter. He married you for your money."

"Blair!" she exclaimed. "How can you say such a thing. Wouldn't *any* man marry me for myself alone? Just answer me!"

He flushed, torn between contrition and annoyance.

"Don't let's argue about it," he grumbled. "I don't want to talk about your husband. He makes me hot under the collar, and I can't get at him to punch his head."

"And so you'd let me stay all alone at the hotel and think about him! If he affects *you* that way, how much

worse do you suppose *I* feel about him? Can't you see how much more exasperating he is to *me* than he possibly can be to *you*? Just imagine how I feel, imagining that that brute must have *kissed* me!"

The light in Langstaff's gray eyes became murderous.

"Perdita," he snapped, "if you don't stop talking about your husband, I'll hit the first man-sized man who comes along. I can't stand it!"

"All right," she agreed. "I'm sure *I* don't want to talk about him. I only said, 'I *won't* be left alone with him.'"

"Perdita"—he softened—"I was inconsiderate, but it was only that I want you to take care of yourself. I can't forget how you came to me."

She gave a buoyant little skip in her step.

"I know. I must have the constitution of a mule. Why, every scratch on my feet is healed, and I do believe I've gained ten pounds. I just tingle all over with nice new blood shooting through me. Why, I don't believe anything could make me really sick—except, of course, if I should see my husband."

"I thought we'd agreed to forget him," he growled. "There you are! Perdita," he exclaimed, glad to deflect her attention from the hated topic, "your spring day is complete—there goes a hurdy-gurdy!"

"Where?" she asked eagerly.

He indicated a thickset man in shabby velveteen, his shoulders settled into heavy leather straps that dragged an old-fashioned hurdy-gurdy. It was a highly decorated affair; red, blue, and gilt pictures of dancing peasants adorned its front, and gingerbread scrollwork, like gilded spaghetti, crawled up its sides. A bedraggled woman of uncertain age, a tambourine slung by a ribbon to her ample belt, assisted by pushing the unwieldy instrument from behind. The slow-mov-

ing trio was making its difficult way down a side street.

"Oh!" cried Perdita. "Of course! Now I remember—it's music! Oh, I must hear it! Come quickly."

She darted across the Avenue, ignoring the startled protest of the traffic policeman, paused on the opposite bank of the flowing motor tide, and beckoned gayly to Langstaff, who followed her Lorelei gesture recklessly.

"Perdita!" he called, but she gave him no further heed, confident of his following. She hurried in pursuit of the hurdy-gurdy. "Oh, my Lord!" said Langstaff ruefully. "Why did I mention it? What is she up to now?"

Perdita did not leave him long in doubt. She was accosting the musicians in voluble Italian. The grinning grinder unlimbered; his bedraggled spouse bobbed and smiled. Perdita pushed a dollar bill into her grimy hand and waved to Langstaff to hurry. The spot Perdita had chosen for her concert was a fashionable residence street in the Fifties, with Fifth Avenue for a background. Luxurious motor cars crowded the curb; smartly dressed women passed, eying the extraordinary girl with the dyed hair with a look askance. Langstaff squirmed uneasily.

"Listen," cried Perdita. "They're Neapolitans, they have four children, and they've only been in this country a year. His name is Giovanni Berdoti, and his hurdy-gurdy rents for two and a half a day. Now they're going to play."

Langstaff groaned aloud and looked about. Three amused chauffeurs grinned at his confusion; a black silk lady, her nose in the air, passed them with disapproval. Perdita was all pleased anticipation. The Italian seized the crank with artistic enthusiasm, and the ancient instrument of torture launched forth the opening notes of the "Barcarole" from the "Contes d'Hoff-

mann." Langstaff turned away wearily, but the change of countenance of the first chauffeur on his right drew his attention to Perdita. Then he, too, gasped in amazement at the transformation.

She was a being transfigured. She seemed to have grown taller, to be illumined as from a great light within. Her sapphire eyes were open wide in wonder, the wonder of the awakened Brunnhilde, aroused to all the wealth of the world's beauty and mystery. Her face was ecstatic. She moved forward slowly—one step—another, as if approaching invisible footlights. As one in a trance, she opened her lips and sang. Never before had that street echoed to such music. Her voice rose, great, clear, and triumphant, honey sweet, pure, majestic, and soul-thrilling. It came like great drafts of cool water to the thirsty, like manna in the wilderness, like the vision of the Grail, something long dreamed of, long desired, suddenly made manifest, too wonderful to be real, too perfect to last; like the glowing unfolding of rose dawn, like the mystery of the northern lights in the blue night of heaven. Each note hung on the air with the golden perfection of a ray of light, quivered and hung and was absorbed by another as beautiful.

All other sound, all the roar of traffic, seemed suddenly stilled. The minds of the listeners had room only for the song. Pedestrians halted, arrested in mid-motion; truckmen hauled their horses to a stand; motorists cut off their engines. The street had fallen under a spell. The last mysterious, rapturous cadence dreamed and died away, and still its power held sway. No one moved.

"By gad!" said the nearest chauffeur under his breath.

His voice broke the charm. The organ grinder threw himself upon his knees, tears streaming down his cheeks.

"Oh, prima donna, prima donna, who are you? Who are you?" he sobbed.

"Who am I?" echoed Perdita in the dream voice that carried even in its lowest tones, with its vibrant perfection of pitch. "Play again," she whispered. "I am finding myself."

Before the Italian could get up from his posture of adoration, his wife had seized the handle of the hurdy-gurdy. Again its raucous music chimed forth.

But one may not with impunity give grand opera in the city streets of the land of the free. The crowd had gathered about the street musicians. There was excited talk; windows were thrown open; heads craned out; front doors were held ajar by curious servants; area gates yawned; and before Perdita, still in the full glory of her exaltation, could begin her second song, a blue-coated policeman came blustering through the throng.

"Here, here, what d'yer mean? Move on, move on!"

Perdita came to herself with a gasp.

"Did you hear me sing?" she demanded, wide-eyed, as she turned to Langstaff.

"Did I hear you?" he muttered. "Did I hear you? Let's get out of this."

The press began to jostle closer; the bluecoat was making headway.

"Here, hop in," whispered the liveried chauffeur. "I'll get you out of this. The boss won't mind—he's a good sport."

He flung open the door of the gorgeous limousine and almost pushed them into its padded depths, slammed the door, jumped to his place, and the great car slid away from the curb out into the roadway and swerved into the maelstrom of the Avenue.

Langstaff picked up the speaking tube and gave the name of their destination, only a few blocks away. The man nodded, accelerated his speed, held out his hand in warning, and swung down the side street in a wide curve that landed

them before the elaborate canopy of the hotel door.

Langstaff assisted Perdita to alight, while his right hand fumbled in his pocket. The obliging chauffeur had earned his tip, but he shook his head, his eyes fixed in awe on Perdita's face.

"No," he said with decision. "I got my money's worth. If you don't mind, what's the lady's name, sir? I'd like to take in the show where she sings."

Blair blushed purple.

"She is my wife—Mrs. Langstaff," he mumbled. "Not singing in public at present. Thank you very much indeed for your service."

He turned away nervously, as he caught the curious stare of the starter and the door man. Perdita showed no concern at all. Her mind was wholly occupied with the great adventure, and she followed Langstaff to the elevator and into their sitting room with jubilant alacrity. The door was scarcely closed when she ran to him, seized him by the lapels of his coat, and gazed at him eagerly.

"Tell me!" she panted. "Didn't I sing well? Isn't that a *perfectly wonderful* voice? And to think I didn't know I had it! Why, that's as good a voice as Melba's. Indeed, I think it's better, don't you?"

"Perdita," he said gravely, taking her chin between his hands and looking into the blue depths of her eyes, "I'm afraid of you. You frighten me. Who are you? What are you? You are too great, too wonderful. You can never belong to me—you belong to the world. I feel you slipping away from me. Oh, Perdita!"

He dropped his hands and strode away across the room, and stood looking out over the wide view of crowding housetops, soaring towers, and spires, over which the red-gold clouds of sunset floated in a lake of amethyst. She came close to him, cuddling her cheek against his arm.

"Don't talk that way," she whispered. "Why, you don't know how happy it makes me to find out nice things about myself, to make you proud of me. Think how I'd feel if I were to learn that I was an epileptic, or that I had a fearful temper or two dozen small children, or was addicted to drugs. Just think how I'd feel! And, besides, I'm making good to you, don't you see?"

He drew her arm through his and patted her hand; he could not trust his voice.

"Why," she went on, "I couldn't have accepted all your sacrifices and all your chivalry if I hadn't, 'way down deep, been sure I was worth it. Indeed I couldn't. Don't you remember, I told you I *knew* I was somebody worth while, if I could only remember who?"

He nodded. Did he remember? Vividly her picture floated before him, sitting up in his guest-room bed, her first breakfast tray on her knees.

"Well," she went on, "you ought to be glad I was so truthful, and besides, now, you see, I'll never be conceited. I know what it is to be me without my voice—just me, without anything at all behind me—and it was that me you liked, wasn't it?"

"That I loved—always," he whispered.

"That's the important thing, then." Her voice was all caress. "Isn't it wonderful that we should have this experience—we two out of all the world? It makes it so much better, doesn't it? Just think of all the millions and millions of lovers all tangled up with prejudices and pasts and other people's opinions of each other. And I'm just as positive that the other thing I told you is true, too—absolutely true—the other one thing I'm sure of."

"What?" he laughed. "That your hair wasn't born magenta?"

She frowned.

"No, I don't mean my hair; that's not important. I mean that, whoever my

husband is, I never, never loved him. I have never felt toward anybody in the world what I feel toward you—that's what I mean."

Langstaff turned away from the window; the amethyst light shone on her lovely upturned face. In spite of his dark forebodings, he believed.

"Please God, Perdita, you aren't lost to me."

"No, I promise," she said softly, "absolutely, really, truly promise, and you know I keep my word."

"Yes, dear," he answered.

She smiled the impish smile he loved, as she changed the subject with her usual abruptness.

"To-morrow," she announced, "I'm going to a music store, and I'm going to buy all the scores of all the operas. Then I'll find out those I know. After that I'll inquire who is the greatest musician in the city. I'll go to him and say, 'Please listen to me sing.' Then I'll sing for him, and when he recovers from his surprise, I'll say, 'Whose voice is this?' And he'll tell me who I am, for there's only one voice in all the world like the one I sing with. He's bound to know whom it belongs to."

Langstaff nodded.

"I'm afraid you're right," he said; "unless he never heard you before."

"Then," she persevered, "he can tell me who trained me—any musician can tell by the method; and I've been wonderfully trained. Why, my voice production is perfect. Didn't you notice it?" She spoke with the complete detachment of one who has found a jewel in the street and speculates upon its worth and ownership. "Why, listen—ah—a—a—" The glory of her voice filled the room. "Ah—ah—" She ran the scale, then followed it with a brilliant run and a sustained, incredibly high note. "That's perfectly wonderful teaching," she commented, "and of course this accounts for all the languages—French and German and Ital-

ian—and my having a sort of stage fright before things happened and being perfectly calm when they *did* happen. Isn't it extraordinary *how* clearly it all unravels? I am so hungry," she finished abruptly.

He laughed happily. She had come back to common ground.

"Shall we dine here in the sitting room?" he suggested.

She shook her head.

"Oh, no. I want to go where there's music—I want to hear music. Why, don't you realize that it's as if I'd just discovered it?"

"I know," said Langstaff. "And like as not you'd get up and sing, and we'd be put out. No, Perdita, I'm not used to being the husband of a prima donna—yet."

"Very well, we'll dine in private, like a real prima donna," she laughed. "Isn't it splendid, though, for a prima donna to have a physician for a husband? You'll have to become a throat specialist and a fat curest, and sew people's heads up when they battle for orchestra chairs. And what do you prescribe for dinner?"

The repast was quickly forthcoming, to the bride's delight. Every new viand was a delicious discovery. But she seemed distract.

"Listen," she exclaimed at the fish course. "There's an opera called 'Faust.'"

"There is," said Langstaff, "with a character in it called *Marguerite*."

"Exactly," said Perdita, "and I sing it. That daisy on the fish, made out of a turnip and a piece of carrot, reminded me of it. I sing it be-au-tifully."

"There's another opera, and I'm crazy about a flute," she observed a little later, as she stabbed a squab meditatively.

"What's that? 'Lucia di Lammermoor'?" he suggested.

"That's it." She dropped her fork

and clapped her hands. "Lucia." But I don't like it. Now I'm in a bonnet with side curls, and a hoop skirt."

"Mimi?" he volunteered.

"Yes, I'm *Mimi*, and I'm cold, and I do like this." She threw her napkin on a chair and pantomimed the distress of Puccini's lachrymose heroine. "And then what's this one?" A sudden twist of the body, an intoeing movement, an uplifting of the eyes and hands, and *Cho-cho-San* stood before him. "Listen," she murmured in that dream cadence that seemed to breathe the music of a whole orchestra, "I sing so—like this— Oh, it's coming back— No, you don't have to tell me. I'm waiting, waiting in the heartbreak of the dawn, because he hasn't come. I know I'm forgotten; I know there's nothing to live for; I know there's no honor upon earth. There's nothing but a sword." She moved forth both hands in a hypnotized gesture. "Poor little *Madam Butterfly* gazing at the sword of her fathers!" Perdita turned tearless, tragic eyes on Langstaff. "Blair," she whispered, "if I should ever, ever have to wait for you like that, and you shouldn't come! I should die! Oh, poor, poor *Butterfly*!"

She choked with emotion, and Langstaff held his own feelings in check with difficulty, so completely had she taken him into her mimic world.

"Perdita dear," he argued, "it's not going to happen. You'll be bored because your persistent lover won't move a yard from your side. And here is salad—Russian salad. That will be too polite to quarrel with a Japanese lady's appetite."

She became Perdita again. With disconcerting suddenness she slipped to her seat with a little smack of her lips and greeted the salad as an old and valued friend. She reached the coffee without further operatic digression. Indeed, for the moment the all-absorbing topic seemed in abeyance while she

questioned Blair of his childhood, his college days, his hectic experiences in the foreign quarters of Newtonport Mills. She was prettily insistent for details, reconstructing his past for herself with the same intense visualization with which she sought her own.

"There!" she said at length. "That will keep my husband at bay. I have lots and lots to think about. I'll let you go, for just one hour. One little hour, and you may lay the dragnet for all the ships I may have sailed on. Of course I'm sure somebody will recognize my voice, but it may take time, and we'll have to verify it."

He rose, found his hat and gloves, and turned to kiss her.

"Oh, but it's turned chilly! Hear the wind," she objected. "You can't go out without your overcoat. Wait, I'll get it for you—do let me," she begged, as he turned to intercept her. "It's fun to take care of you just for once."

She ran into his room. It was the first time she had crossed his threshold, and his heart gave a leap. It seemed to bring him suddenly into closer and more human contact with her. He repressed his emotion. She was still his ward, his sacred charge, the soul without a past given into his keeping. She returned, holding his light overcoat outspread, helped him on with it, patted him in, and led him to the door.

"One little hour," she reminded him.

As the door closed behind him, she stood looking at the unresponsive panels. Then, as she twirled slowly on the heel of her satin slipper and faced the room, plunged in thought, her eye caught a crumpled bunch of newspaper on the floor. She recalled having seen it in Blair's coat pocket. Doubtless it was something Blair had wanted to keep. She picked it up and idly smoothed the wrinkled pages. Then she gave a little cry and stood transfixed, staring at a headline.

An hour later, when Blair, having put the machinery of investigation in motion, returned to the apartment, he heard his four knocks answered in a small, strained voice. The room was dark. Before him, silhouetted against the star-sprinkled night sky, he saw Perdita's figure crouching in the window seat.

"Perdita!" he exclaimed. "Why the darkness? Does your head still ache? I thought you lost that with the hurdy-gurdy."

She did not answer his bantering.

"Blair," she said, and her voice was strangely grave, "come and sit by me."

He came close to her, throbbing with apprehension, awe-struck before a supreme moment. He knew before she spoke what had happened.

"You have remembered?" he whispered tremulously.

"Yes," she answered, "and you knew all along who I was, and you kept it from me!"

"What?" exclaimed Langstaff. "I knew all along who you are? Why, I don't know now! What do you mean? I don't understand."

"Why do you lie about it?" Her voice broke in a sob. "It's you I don't understand."

"But I swear," he urged, mystified beyond measure, "I didn't know, and don't know. And if I did, why in the world should I hide it from you? Don't you know that this situation is hard enough for me to bear? Don't you know I'd end it if I could?"

"Oh," gasped Perdita, "I was afraid of it! You want to divorce me!"

"Have you gone crazy?" he demanded. "Perdita, explain yourself or I shall go mad."

"If you didn't know about me, why did you save that paper?" she inquired hotly.

"What paper?" he parried wildly. "I don't even know what you're referring to."

"Yes, you do, too!" she retorted tearfully. "The newspaper in your overcoat pocket."

He slipped his hand to his side guiltily. The pocket bulged where the spreading contents had been, but the newspaper was not there. He laughed heartily.

"If you want to know why I kept it, I'll tell you. You'll think me a sentimental fool, but you can have the truth. When we ran away from Newtonport, I snatched that paper from the table because you were thinly clad, and I wanted it to keep out the cold for you. Well, you wore it all through that mad day and night—and when I came for you to your room in Bridgeport, it was lying on the little marble-topped bureau, where you had discarded it. It had been close to you—there was something in its stiffened curves that suggested you. It was a silly impulse, but I couldn't bear to think of a stupid hotel maid picking it up and throwing it out to be burned—just because it had been with you, a part of our adventure. I took it, and I've kept it. There, Perdita, that's all there is to it."

There was silence. In the dark he could hear her moving softly. He waited in suspense; then she spoke.

"Turn on the lights, please, Blair. I want to show you something."

Obediently he found the switch. The room and all its details jumped from the dark. Perdita was standing by the window.

"Blair," she said again, and held out the paper to him. With a shaking hand he took it absently, his eyes anxiously seeking to read her face. "Read," she said.

His eyes fell to the printed page; the type danced before his eyes, the pictures and sketches seemed to twist into grotesques. He could only recall the appearance of his little consulting room in the yellow frame house at Newtonport. He was again at the hour of two,

of a keen March morning, with the memory of Emilie's stitched scalp in his fingers. It was the hour before the dawn of his life, the moment before Perdita had come to him. The recollection passed like a flash, leaving his mind clear, and the all-but-forgotten item hit him with the violence of a physical shock—"Young Singer Disappears."

Miss Kathleen Cosway, pupil of Angelotte, whose operatic début was the season's musical sensation, has disappeared from Rome.

He looked up astonished.

"Yes," she said softly. "Yes."

He remained standing stiffly, the journal clutched in his hand.

"I remember everything now," she continued. "I've been sitting here in the dark, and it's all come back. I sailed from Genoa, when I found I could buy the tickets of a Belgian lady who was taken ill in the pension and had to go to the hospital. The ship was the *Iona*. What happened I don't know. I was in my berth when the shock came. Some one must have tried to save me by tying me on the wreckage after I was unconscious—perhaps the stewardess.

There was silence. Langstaff was fighting for self-control.

"Blair," she said slowly, "I'm frightened. I'm wrapped around with strangeness. I didn't feel that way at all when I didn't know. Now—I want to be comforted." Her voice was the cry of a child. She seemed suddenly pathetic and alone. "Isn't it strange?" she whispered. "I searched and searched and tried to find myself, and all the while the answer lay over my own heart!"

"Perdita," he stammered, for fear be numbed him now that he was face to face with her awakening memory, "Perdita—the wedding ring?"

She looked up at him shyly.

"That was mother's," she whispered. She held out her hand. "This is mine—and yours."



The Traitor

By George Weston

Author of "Fanshawe the Fanciful," "Two Men and a Manikin," etc.

MORLEY was in his most somber mood. He had thought that the change from London to New York would lighten his gloom, but it hadn't.

Every one in the company was whispering, "For Heaven's sake, what's the matter with Morley?"

As a matter of fact, the great star was stewing over twin fires.

Asquith and the war were the first. For years Morley had expected a knighthood, and just when his hopes had been brightest, the war had broken out; and actors, however great, had suddenly become a drug upon the London market.

And then, because of his lines in "The Savage Woman," a suffragette had egged him! Wherefore Morley had shaken the dust of London from his feet.

"I'm too old to fight," he told himself. "I'll go to America. There are no snobs there, no struggles for vain titles, nothing but a sincere, unspoiled democracy."

So he signed a contract for thirty weeks at a fabulous price per week. His first New York play was "Whom the Gods Love." At the end of a fortnight, his leading lady left him to go to the front to be a nurse.

"I just can't help it," she sighed.

"Everybody's gone nursing, and if I stay away, I shall never be able to show my face in London again."

That gave Morley a horrible jolt. And when he discovered that his next leading lady was Margaret Chatworth, he nearly stripped his gears.

Margaret was one of those militants who are converting the stage to the proper way of thinking. And rumor has always maintained that her fair hand propelled the egg that made James Morley shudder.

"Great heavens!" muttered Morley, when he looked into the innocent blue eyes of Margaret. "But aren't they coming home to roost!"

He tossed all that night, and in the morning he had selected his revenge. Miss Chatworth prided herself upon her art. Ha! Then he, the great Morley, would make her look as if she had never stepped upon a stage before, as if she couldn't tell the Hamlet trap from the sink line.

And he did it, too—first, because he was Morley, and second, because the devil was in the man.

The play was an emotional one, and Morley soared to such heights that Chatworth couldn't follow him. Instead of flying, she floundered. He spoke to her like a voice in the wilderness, but when she should have an-

swered him in kind, she became, instead, the reed shaken by the wind.

Morley taunted her, and she fidgeted. He stared at her, and her eyes dropped. In the second act, he simulated madness until she really thought he was cracked, and then he strode toward her with such fury that she backed away and bumped into things. Hissing, he called her names; and how she trembled to whack him over the head with an umbrella and pin a "Votes for Women" upon his lifeless corpse!

"Margaret," said the critics, "is a clever little egg thrower. But she's not such a much on the acts."

That was the ultimate straw. Miss Chatworth wrote two epic lines to the managing director; and Barnett, the managing director, came right around to manage and direct.

"He—he's not an actor! He's a vampire!" Margaret was telling him, while Morley held the stage alone at the end of the second act. "And I simply can't stand him any longer. I'm losing my reputation, too—"

A rising storm of applause interrupted them, and the next moment, preceded and followed by two vergerlike attendants, the great Morley strode past them, stoop-shouldered, somber, unseeing. The applause gained in roaring volume, but the great Morley stalked on to his dressing room, unheeding, chewing the cud of a disappointed knighthood, while his attendants kept their eyes peeled for eggs. Barnett followed him.

"Chatworth's quitting," he announced to his greatest star a minute later.

Morley looked up with baleful eyes.

"Has she ever started?"

"Well, she's quitting, anyhow. She's the second in two weeks, and I've no one else to give you. You'll have to play to her understudy while I get a Shakespearean revival into shape."

Morley groaned.

"I'm very sick of it," he said at last.

"Sick of playing the mummery of kings and princes and other titled fools. That's why I came to America." Suddenly his voice fell to its deep, thrilling *vox dei*. "I'm sick, sick of these actresses who are neither English nor American, and sick of these plays that are neither fish, nor feather, nor flesh! I'm sick of acting a Danish prince who never existed, and an altogether impossible Jew of Venice. Haven't you got an American playwright who's never been abroad, and a leading lady who's never been east of Boston? Can't you find me something big and natural and wonderful, like this wonderful country of yours?"

He swept on, but for once in his life he had an audience that failed to follow him.

"Boston!" Barnett was thinking. "I ought to run up there and see that stock company play 'The Traitor'. If it's as good as they say—and if Mary Danis is the girl I've heard she is——"

He smiled to himself, not a particularly winning smile, but full of meaning. And when the Knickerbocker Limited left for Boston the following noon, among those present was Mr. David Barnett, shrewd-eyed, red-lipped, maker and breaker of stars.

II.

Once in every so often a miracle happens. An inscrutable woman is born.

She is inscrutable because she is different, and she is different not because of any fond art, but because she was born so.

Just as some women are born with the charm of moles, and some with an infinite capacity for future operations, so also some women are born without the power to love.

If this were more of an essay on heredity and less of a love story, it might be interesting to note here the

effect of prenatal influence upon Mary Danis. Her father and mother had hated each other with a right royal good will, and when Mary grew up, she found that she was short on affection.

And probably for the same reason she was a wonder at make-believe. Being strong at make-believe, she had joined Willis Radway's stock company, and in less than a year she was Radway's leading lady. Not only this, but she was his one perpetual puzzle.

She was beautiful as Juno, stately as a princess, with limpid eyes and a voice that was pure music, but because of that law of heredity which is embodied in the second commandment, she couldn't love. It took Radway six months to get his first inkling of that. And then he laughed in derision, crying to Fate: "Ridiculous! Leave it to me!"

Fate left it to him.

Mary was slow of grace; Radway was quick as quicksilver. She was quiet; he wasn't. She was tranquil; he vivacious. In nearly all things each was the complement of the other, and because the laws of attraction are immutable, Mary grew to like Radway more than she liked any other human being.

But she only liked him immensely; she didn't love him a bit.

He made the most tempestuous love to her, but her respiration stayed normal and her temperature was that of a clam. Radway grew very wretched about it; so wretched, in fact, that he wrote a wonderful melodrama for his stock company.

"Genius has to suffer," he sometimes said. "I know. I have suffered."

And Mary tried so hard to love him! But holding hands had as much effect upon her as holding a doorknob. And as for kissing, she thought it both unhealthy and asinine.

"You love somebody else!" he challenged her one day. They were hav-

ing dinner at the Touraine in honor of "The Traitor's" fiftieth performance.

"No; I don't," she seriously answered. For it was getting to be a very serious business indeed for Mary. Because what's the use of being as beautiful as Juno, and all the rest of it, if you can't love the man you want to love?

"Well, look here, Mary. Let's consider ourselves engaged, anyhow. You can always use your privilege of changing your mind, and as your fiancé, I can look after you a whole lot better than I can when I'm only your friend."

Mary calmly considered this and said she had no objection.

"It may even help," she said.

"Good!" exclaimed Radway. "And now we're engaged, I've just thought of a perfectly splendid way of spending to-morrow morning."

"Have you really, Billy? What is it?"

"We'll get a mariner's license and then, calling first at some quiet rectory, we'll launch our bark upon the matrimonial seas. What do you say?"

She gave him one of her slow smiles.

"No, Billy. That won't happen until —well, until I wake up."

With grace unruffled, she handed him the cream, like a marble statue passing nectar; and though he gave a burlesque groan, Radway knew that she had used the phrase that best described herself. Mary had not yet wakened up.

She rested her elbows upon the table and, cradling her chin on the backs of her interlaced fingers, she let her glance go across the room, through the wall, over the Common, and on and on until it came to rest somewhere between Popocatepetl and Kilauea, two other volcanoes of history which have also had their periods of slumber.

"It's awfully queer," she said, "but somehow I just can't help it. It seems to me as if I'm waiting for something, though I don't know what it is." She

reached for her furs and gave him a smile like a rainbow over Popocatepetl aforesaid. "But when it does come, Billy——"

"Good Lord!" he breathed, springing to his feet. "May it come soon!"

III.

This story, in its sharper analyses, really concerns three persons. Let us now consider the third, beginning with a question or two.

Why is it that the village drunkard beats his wife and terrorizes his family?

And why is it that Sappho made a name for herself ever so long ago?

Answer: Every human being is an actor.

Shakespeare may have helped me to that, but I will help Shakespeare to this: Every human being with ambition wants to star.

If the village drunkard turned sober, the neighbors would yawn at him, his wife would bully him, and when he reproved his children, they would rend the air with lamblike laughter, crying, "Ba-a-á!"

But as the village drunkard, he is an actor to be noted. He is a figure in the neighborhood. His name is on every one's tongue. If he cannot be a hero, he will be a villain. Wherefore, he beats his wife and feels a terrible satisfaction that his children tremble at his glare.

Sappho likewise. Having tried other *métiers*, she finds that Sappho is her strongest part. In that she shines, she excels. There is drama in that, tragedy, pathos, purple patches of life. Wherefore, she becomes Sappho and takes that same terrible satisfaction in playing well her part.

So with Don Juan.

And so at last with Barnett, whose name is linked with Don Juan's for reasons that will presently appear.

But enough of metaphysics. Let us go to the Bay State Theater and see Mary Danis in action. The curtain is up. The audience is silent. "The Traitor" is being played.

Radway, the hero, had reached the scene where he began to suspect the presence of a villain in his home. This villain was in his customary place behind a curtain, R. U. E., waiting to be discovered, and Mary was peeping through a hole in the back drop looking at the audience.

As calm as a lake on a midsummer day, as serene as a cloudless sky, as imperturbable as a bust of Minerva doing service in an oculist's window—such was Mary.

But suddenly Minerva blinked her eyes and looked again. A moment later Mary was behind the curtain where the villain lay hidden.

"What's the matter?" he whispered. "Hush!" said Mary.

Radway, holding his audience at tense attention, reached the curtain and disappeared for those breathless five seconds in which he is supposed to be grappling with his enemy. And there, to his utter astonishment, he found Mary crouching over the equally astonished heavy villain.

"Will!" she whispered. "Dave Barnett's in the house. Tenth row! Left aisle!"

There was no time for more. Radway grasped his waiting enemy and dragged him through the curtains to the audience's stern gaze.

"Good Lord!" gasped Radway to himself. "Mary's excited! What's going to happen next?"

He gave her the cue for which she had been waiting, and out on the stage swept Mary. Theretofore she had always played her part with a deceptive ease that reminded Radway of a conjurer drawing rabbits and doves out of an empty cornucopia. But that night Mary was different.

Instead of rabbits and doves, she drew out thunder, lightning, and the clash of cosmic forces. She was no longer quiescent—she was dynamic. The lightning struck, the heavens opened, the earth trembled, and in the thick of it moved Mary, dominating the scene with perfect mastery.

The curtain fell, and Radway turned to Mary.

"My dear girl!" he began in awed delight. "If you aren't some Ellen Terry!"

"Oh, Billy, I'm frightened!" she whispered.

Two red splotches were deepening her make-up, and she trembled a little. She held out her hands, and Radway grasped them.

"What are you frightened at?"

"I—don't know. I'm afraid I didn't do it justice, and Barnett won't like it. And, oh, it would be such a big, big help to you! Will, don't let the curtain go up again!"

But the applause of the audience would be silenced with nothing less. Barnett, in the tenth row, counted the curtain calls with grim approval, and half an hour after the performance had ended, he had stated the terms on which he would buy the play. Most of the details are not essential to this story, but the leading conditions were these:

Mary Danis was to be leading lady with the great Morley.

And Radway was to head a number two company and take the road for a year's booking.

"But that would separate Miss Danis and myself," objected Radway.

"What of it?"

"Miss Danis is my fiancée, and we play together or not at all."

Barnett smiled, the shrewd-eyed maker and breaker of stars, and though he answered Radway, he looked at Mary.

"You're making the mistake of your

life," he said. "I'm the man who names the terms."

"Exactly," acknowledged Radway. "And I'm the man who refuses them."

Barnett, confident, picked up his hat and reached the door before Radway turned to Mary, expecting to receive a smile of approval. Instead, he received a most carefully considered expression of disappointment.

"One moment!" he sharply exclaimed to his departing visitor, and he led Mary into the next room.

"What's the matter, Mary?" he asked anxiously. "Don't you want it that way? You know I simply couldn't leave you alone with Barnett. Everybody knows what he is."

She looked at him with tender reproach.

"But, Billy," she said, cunningly arguing for herself, although she had no thought but for him, "you know you can trust me, don't you? I'm so tired of stock, and we may never get a chance like this again. And then to star with Morley!"

She kissed him, and after he had stored away the memory of that kiss as one of his sweetest treasures, he briskly opened the door.

"All right, Mr. Barnett," he said. "Terms accepted."

Barnett smiled—not at him, but at Mary.

"You'll be ready any time?" he asked.

"Any time," nodded Mary.

He left, and she danced a few chaste steps around the room.

"What are you dancing for?" asked Radway mournfully.

"Up to this moment," she said, "I've been dancing because I always knew you would be a great man."

"But we won't see each other any more."

"Won't we? Heh! I have my woman's privilege, haven't I?"

Her thoughts were still chaotic, but

she was sure she would find a way to keep with Radway, even if she had to deliver an eleventh-hour ultimatum. And meanwhile Radway's success as a playwright was assured. She danced again to another, more festive step.

"What are you dancing for now?" asked Radway with another sigh.

Mary laughed privily, as the merry little marmosets laugh sometimes at the sunset.

"Never you mind!" she cried. "You'll find out in time!"

Nevertheless, I will tell the secret now: Our Mary had "wakened up."

IV.

The Boston farewell of "The Traitor" was being played.

Again Radway was on the stage, suspecting a villain's presence in his home, and Mary was in the wings near the switchboard awaiting her cue.

Barnett joined her there.

"Glad it's the last?" he whispered.

Mary nodded reflectively, grappling with that ever-present problem of how to keep with Radway. To be separated from Radway now was out of the question, for the strongest—but one—of all earthly reasons. Should she deliver her ultimatum to Barnett then and there? She was thinking it over when Barnett spoke again.

"You'll make a hit on Broadway—my dear," he carelessly remarked, and as carelessly he added, "If you want to let me help you."

His hands were in his pockets and he was smiling at her with that red-lipped smile for which he was famous. Yet if Mary caught his meaning, she gave no sign, but began to look over his shoulder at Radway, who was holding the audience in palpitating silence while he continued his business of suspecting a traitor in his home.

"Do you know, my dear," whispered Barnett again, "that you'll be called the

most beautiful actress in America? That is," he slowly added, "if you want me to help you."

"Of course I want you to help me," murmured Mary, still watching Radway over Barnett's shoulder.

Taking no heed of the electrician, who stood at his switchboard, Barnett placed his hands on Mary's hips, in a manner sometimes associated with certain phases of the tango, and just at that moment Radway turned and saw the look on Mary's face. The play altogether forgotten, Radway strode straight toward the pair in the wings.

Mary was struggling to free herself, but Barnett's hands held her tightly, and she was fearful of pushing him out on the stage and spoiling the scene. But when she saw Radway striding toward them, this fear left her as an unnecessary waste of emotion. She put her hands on Barnett's shoulders, and with a mighty shove she pushed him backward into Radway's arms.

"Will," she whispered, snatching at the only remaining chance of saving the scene, "play him for the traitor!"

"That's right!" laughed Radway with exultation.

He dragged Barnett, dumfounded, into full view of the audience and went on with his lines, leaving the real villain in his hiding place behind the curtain, more astonished than ever.

It is a strong, a powerful scene, as every one knows. After a realistic struggle, the villain is finally thrown out on the street, his hands tied behind him, the sign "Traitor" hung around his neck. But when Radway should have turned to the back drop that night and opened the street door, he glanced down into the orchestra, instead.

"Oh, oh!" gasped Mary. "He's going to throw him over the apron!"

She sprang to the electrician.

"Quick! The curtain!"

The red light flashed, and as the fab-

ric fell, Barnett's head struck against the cloth as a fist might strike a pillow. So close had been the call!

"Who rang the curtain down?" demanded Radway, running to see.

Mary faced him, electric, dominant.

"I did!" She turned to the goggling stage hands and pointed to Barnett. "Take that man to Mr. Radway's dressing room, and when the reporters come to see why the curtain dropped, tell them to wait a few minutes and they shall have the story."

She followed to the dressing room, and as soon as she was alone with Barnett and Radway, it was Mary again who took command of the situation.

"Mr. Barnett," she said, "you can see now that Will was right. You're not to be trusted. So you'll either put him in Morley's company with me, or I will give the story to the papers. And if I do, you know very well that the name of 'The Traitor' will stick to you as long as you live!"

No one had ever accused Barnett of being dull-witted. In imagination he saw the front pages of the metropolitan dailies making a feature of the story, with pictures, interviews, and cartoons. He saw himself walking down Broadway, and on every hand he heard the knowing whisper, "There's the traitor." He harked to the future, and he heard the echo there like a far-away cuckoo on a rosemary bush: "Traitor! Traitor! Traitor!"

"Tut, tut!" he exclaimed, lividly smiling. "You want to have your fiancé with you? Then you shall have him! Not only to look after you, but—great heavens!—as a protection to me!"

There was a knock on the door. Mary opened it an inch.

"Two reporters out here," said a discreet voice.

"Good!" said Mary. "Ask them for a fountain pen and a few sheets of paper. Thanks. Now, Mr. Barnett!"

V.

Place: Broadway.

Time: Night.

Occasion: The first appearance of "The Traitor" in New York.

The theater was crowded, for Morley was then in the height of his fame. Like a demigod he took his place between the side drops, preceded and followed by his vergerlike attendants. And like a demigod he responded to his cue and trod upon the stage.

Breathless was the applause, and it uplifted him. Breathless was the hush, and it exalted him. He opened his mouth, and his voice sent prickly little shivers through the house. Fifteen hundred pairs of eyes moved, as if fascinated, with his lightest gesture. He swayed, and the audience swayed with him. He sighed, and the gallery unconsciously sighed in compassionate echo.

"But wait—she's coming now!"

This was Mary's cue, and even as Morley had made his entrance with Olympian majesty, so Mary advanced with the grace of a goddess. Morley caught a glimpse of the assurance behind her serenity and felt as well the start of attention that ran through the house.

"She dares?" muttered Morley to himself. "We'll see!" And he turned upon her like a lion.

"He's going to play her down," grinned Barnett, watching. "Good night, Mary!"

Morley was no longer the actor—he was the superactor, showing mankind the workings of their immortal sparks, while his own burned, a dazzling blue flame. He aroused himself to perilous heights, but when he expected to leave Mary below, he found instead that she was soaring with him. Her voice thrilled with his. She moved with the same godlike sovereignty. The same spirit of epic tragedy flamed within her,

but untinged with jealousy, a more divine fire.

Gradually Morley became conscious of an unexpected development. This young Juno was holding herself in reserve. If she let herself out, she might possibly beat him. There were moments, indeed, when he felt himself hard pressed to keep up with her. He shook himself, like another Jove shaking ambrosial curls, and attuned himself to his uttermost pitch. But before the act was over, Morley suspected that he had found his match at last. And when the final curtain fell, he knew it.

"My dear," he said, holding Mary with his somber glance, "I congratulate you. I have heard of your experience in Boston, and for that I congratulate you again." He smiled a little, held out his hand, and then his voice fell to that wonderful *vox dei*. "Remain ever as you are," he said, "and you will be truly great. For you reflect what ought to

be the dramatic spirit of America—the young, the brave—and the beautiful."

He stalked away in lonely grandeur, stoop-shouldered, unseeing, suddenly feeling old. Mary turned and faced Radway.

"Will! Did you hear him?" she whispered. "And every one's saying what a wonderful play it is! You're famous! Famous!"

"Being so famous," quoth Radway, "I've just thought of a perfectly splendid way of spending to-morrow."

"Have you really, Billy? What is it?"

"We'll call somewhere and get a mariner's license," he repeated, "and then, stopping first at some quiet rectory, we'll launch our bark upon the sea of matrimony. What do you say?"

She hurried away to her dressing room—as the novelists say—like a startled fawn, but not before she had bent her head and whispered in his ear:

"Full speed ahead!"



A SONG

SPRING outside, and birds in song,
Fluttering window blind;
Vagrant dreams that slide along
The drifts of April wind.
Is it piping that I hear?
Sun glint that I see?
Nay, but somewhere—far or near—
My dear has thought of me!

Phantoms of forgotten things
Riding on the breeze;
Sorrow in the broken strings
Of wind-swept, drooping trees.
On my hurt a touch is laid,
And no more pain may be—
Something to my heart has said
My dear remembers me.

ANNA ALICE CHAPIN.



The Unspeakable Perk

By Samuel Hopkins Adams

Author of "Little Miss Grouch," "Average Jones," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

MR. BREWSTER, an American millionaire, on a yachting trip in the Caribbean with his daughter Polly, is detained by business on the island of Caracuña, and Polly, with the American girl's fearlessness, takes the opportunity to explore the country unattended. On one of her solitary trips, she meets a young American scientist, whose huge green goggles give him the appearance of a big insect. Mr. Beetle Man, she calls him. Thinking that she will never see him again, as she is sailing the next day, she obeys a sudden impulse and confides in him. She has run away from home because three men want to marry her, and she cannot decide which to take. One of them—Mr. Preston Fairfax Fitzhugh Carroll, a hot-tempered Southerner, of the bluest blood and the most unyielding traditions—has followed her to Caracuña. On parting from her, Mr. Beetle Man announces that she will not sail the next day, and that evening she learns that he is right; that the Dutch have just established a blockade, as a result of some trouble with the government of Caracuña. There has been, too, a diplomatic break between Caracuña and the United States. Both of these difficulties are supposed to have been fostered by Von Plaanden, the representative of Hochwald. There is a rumor, also, that bubonic plague has broken out on the island, and that a rigid quarantine will be enforced upon the arrival of a Doctor Luther Pruyn, special-duty man of the U. S. health service. Doctor Brewster remembers that Luther Pruyn was a classmate of his at college. Polly learns, too, that her beetle man's name is Perkins, that he lives in the mountains some distance from town, and that he is known as "The Unspeakable Perk," because of his strange, rude ways. The next day Polly has an encounter on a street car with Von Plaanden, who is intoxicated. Perkins intervenes, but upon the arrival of the police takes to his heels. Polly is provoked by his unchivalrous behavior, but decides that it is part of his general oddness. Fitzhugh Carroll, however, hears of it, and is outraged. He warns Polly that Perkins is not a fit person for her to associate with, and hints at a scandal. Polly laughs at the idea. Some days later, Perkins advises her to persuade her father to leave the yacht and proceed secretly to the mainland, as there is trouble brewing. Polly carries the message to Mr. Brewster, but he scoffs at it. He consents, however, to send a request to Washington that pressure be brought to bear upon the Dutch to let the yacht out. Although communication with the mainland has been cut off, Polly is sure that Perkins will get the message through somehow, and undertakes to carry it to him.

CHAPTER VII.

A MAN that you'd call your friend."

Such had been Fitzhugh Carroll's reference to the unspeakable Perk. With that characterization in her mind, Miss Brewster let herself drift, after her suitor had left her, into a dreamy consideration of the hermit's attitude toward her. She was not given lightly to employ the terms of friend-

ship, yet this new and casual acquaintance had shown a readiness to serve—not as cavalier, but as friend—not too common in the experience of the much courted and a little spoiled beauty. Being, indeed, a "lady nowise bitter to those who served her with good intent," she reflected, with a kindly light in her eyes, that it was all part and parcel of the beetle man's amiable queerness.

Still musing upon this queerness, she

returned to meet her mount, and proceeded up the hill road in meditation, which ceased only when her cream-colored mule started an argument about a turn in the trail. He was a well-bred trotting mule, worth six hundred dollars in gold of any man's money, and he was self-appreciative in knowledge of the fact. He brought a singular firmness of purpose to the support of the negative of her proposition, which was that he should swing north from the broad into the narrow path. When the debate was over, St. John the Baptist—this, I hesitate to state, yet must, it being the truth, was the spirited animal's name—was considerably chastened, and Miss Brewster more than a trifle flushed. She left him tied to a ceiba branch at the exit from the dried creek bed, with strict instructions not to kick, lest a worse thing befall him. Miss Brewster's fighting blood was up, when, ten minutes late because of the episode, she reached the summit of the rock.

"Oh, Mr. Beetle Man, are you there?" she called.

"Yes, Voice. You sound strange. What is it?"

"I've been hurrying, and if you tell me I'm late, I'll—I'll fall on your neck again and break it."

"Has anything happened?"

"Nothing in particular. I've been boxing the compass with a mule. It's tiresome."

He reflected.

"You're not, by any chance, speaking figuratively of your respected parent?"

"Certainly not!" she disclaimed indignantly. "This was a real mule. You're very impertinent."

"Well, you see, he was impertinent to me, saying he was out when he was in. What is his decision: Yes or no?"

"No."

A sharp exclamation came from the nook below.

"Is that the entomological synonym for 'damn'?" she inquired.

"It's a lament for time wasted on a— Well, never mind that."

"But he wants you to carry a message by that secret route of yours. Will you do it for him?"

"No!"

"That's not being a very kind or courteous beetle man."

"I owe Mr. Brewster no courtesy."

"And you pay only where you owe? Just, but hardly amiable. Well, you owe me nothing—but—will you do it for me?"

"Yes."

"Without even knowing what it is?"

"Yes."

"In return you shall have your heart's desire."

"Doubted."

"Isn't the dearest wish of your soul to drive me out of Caracuña?"

"Hum! Well—er—yes. Yes; of course it is."

"Very well. If you can get dad's message on the wire to Washington, he thinks the secretary of state, who is his friend, can reach the Dutch and have them open up the blockade for us."

"Time apparently meaning nothing to him."

"Would it take much time?"

"About four days to a wire."

She gazed at him in amazement.

"And you were willing to give up four days to carry my message through, 'unsight—unseen,' as we children used to say?"

"Willing enough, but not able to. I'd have got a messenger through with it, if necessary. But in four days, there'll be other obstacles besides the Dutch."

"Quarantine?"

"Yes."

"I thought that had to wait for Doctor Pruyn."

"Pruyn's here. That's a secret, Miss Brewster."

"Do you know everything? Has he found plague?"

"Ah, I don't say that. But he will find it, for it's certainly here. I satisfied myself of that yesterday."

"From your beggar friend?"

"What made you think that, O most acute observer?"

"What else would you be talking to him of, with such interest?"

"You're correct. Bubonic always starts in the poor quarters. To know how people die, you have to know how they live. So I cultivated my beggar friend and listened to the gossip of quick funerals and unexplained disappearances. I'd have had some real arguments to present to Mr. Brewster if he had cared to listen."

"He'll listen to Doctor Pruyn. They're old friends."

"No! Are they?"

"Yes. Since college days. So perhaps the quarantine will be easier to get through than the blockade."

"Do you think so? I'm afraid you'll find that pull doesn't work with the service that Doctor Pruyn is in."

"And you think that there will be quarantine within four days?"

"Almost sure to be."

"Then, of course, I needn't trouble you with the message."

"Don't jump at conclusions. There might be another and quicker way."

"Wireless?" she asked quickly.

"No wireless on the island. No. This way you'll just have to trust me for."

"I'll trust you for anything you say you can do."

"But I don't say I can. I say only that I'll try."

"That's enough for me. Ready! Now, brace yourself. I'm coming down."

"Wh-why—wait! Can't you send it down?"

"No. Besides, you know you want to see me. No use pretending, after last

time. Remember your verse now, and I'll come slowly.

Solemnly he began: "Scarab, tarantula, neurop—"

"Doodle bug," she prompted severely.

"Doodle bug, flea," he concluded obediently. "Scarab, tarantula, doodle bug, flea. Scarab, tarantula, doodle —" Oof! I—I—didn't think you'd be here so soon!"

He scrambled to his feet, hardly less palpitating than on the occasion of their first encounter.

"Hopeless!" she mourned. "Incurable! Wanted: a miracle of St. Vitus. Do stop nibbling your hat and sit down."

"I don't think it's as bad as it was," he murmured, obeying. "One gets accustomed to you."

"One gets accustomed to anything in time, even the eccentricities of one's friends."

"Do you think I'm eccentric?"

"Do I think—— Have you ever known any one who didn't think you eccentric?"

Upon this he pondered solemnly.

"It's so long since I've stopped to consider what people think of me. One hasn't time, you know."

"Then one is unhuman. I have time."

"Of course. But you haven't anything else to do."

As this was quite true, she naturally felt exasperated at it.

"Knowing as you do all the secrets of my inner life," she observed sarcastically, "of course you are in a position to judge."

Her own words recalled Carroll's charge, and though, with the subject of them before her, it seemed ridiculously impossible, yet the spirit of mischief, ever hovering about her like an attendant sprite, descended and took possession of her speech. She assumed a severely judicial expression.

"Mr. Beetle Man, will you lay your hand upon your microscope, or whatever else scientists make oath upon, and answer fully and truly the question about to be put to you?"

"As I hope from a blessed release from this abode of lunacy, I do."

"Mr. Beetle Man, have you got an awful secret in your life?"

So sharply did he start that the heavy goggles slipped a fraction of an inch along his nose, the first time she had ever seen them in any degree misplaced. She was herself sensibly disconcerted by his perturbation.

"Why do you ask that?" he demanded.

"Natural interest in a friend," she answered lightly, but with growing wonder. "I think you'd be altogether irresistible if you were a pirate or a smuggler or a revolutionary. The romantic spirit could lurk so securely behind those gloomy soul screens that you wear. What do you keep back of them, O dark and shrouded beetle man?"

"My eyes," he grunted.

"Basilisk eyes, I'm sure. And what behind the eyes?"

"My thoughts."

"You certainly keep them securely. No intruders allowed. But you haven't answered my question. Have you ever murdered any one in cold blood? Or are you a married man trifling with the affections of poor little me?"

"You shall know all," he began, in the leisurely tone of one who commences a long narrative. "My parents were honest, but poor. At the age of three years and four months, a maternal uncle, who, having been a proof reader of Abyssinian dialect stories for a ladies' magazine, was considered a literary prophet, foretold that I—"

"Help! Wait! Stop!"

"Oh, skip your dear uncle!" the bellman exclaimed,

And impatiently tingled his bell."

"I skip forty years," said the baker in tears,"

her companion promptly capped her verse.

"You can't. If you skipped half that, I don't believe it would leave you much."

"When one is giving one's life history by request," he began, with dignity, "interruptions—"

"It isn't by request," she protested, "I don't want your life history. I won't have it! You shan't treat an unprotected and helpless stranger so. Besides, I'm much more interested to know how you came to be familiar with Lewis Carroll."

"Just because I've wasted my career on frivolous trifles like science, you needn't think I've wholly neglected the true inwardness of life, as exemplified in 'The Hunting of the Snark,'" he said gravely.

"Do you know"—she leaned forward, searching his face—"I believe you came out of that book yourself. Are you a Boojum? Will you, unless I 'charm you with smiles and soap,'

"Softly and silently vanish away,
And never be heard of again?"

"You're mixed. You'd be the one to do that if I were a real Boojum. And you'll be doing it soon enough, in any case," he concluded ruefully.

"So I shall, but don't be too sure that I'll 'never be heard of again.'"

He glanced up at the sun, which was edging behind a dark cloud over the gap.

"Is your raging thirst for personal information sufficiently slaked?" he asked. "We've still fifteen or twenty minutes left."

"Is that all? And I haven't yet given you the message!" She drew it from the bag and handed it to him.

"Sealed," he observed.

The girl colored painfully.

"Dad didn't intend— You mustn't think—" With a flash of generous wrath she tore the envelope open and held out the inclosure. "But I shouldn't

have thought you so concerned with formalities," she commented curiously.

"It isn't that. But in some respects, possibly important, it would be better if—" He stopped, looking at her doubtfully.

"Read it," she nodded.

He ran through the brief document.

"Yes; it's just as well that I should know. I'll leave a copy."

Something in his accent made her scrutinize him.

"You're going into danger!" she cried.

"Danger? No; I think not. Difficult, perhaps. But I think it can be put through."

"If it were dangerous, you'd do it just the same," she said, almost accusingly.

"It would be worth some danger now to get you away from greater danger later. See here, Miss Brewster"—he rose and stood over her—"there must be no mistake or misunderstanding about this."

"Don't gloom at me with those awful glasses," she said fretfully. "I feel as if I were being stared at by a hidden person."

He disregarded the protest.

"If I get this message through, can you guarantee that your father will take out the yacht as soon as the Dutch send word to him?"

"Oh, yes. He will do that. How are you going to deliver the message?"

Again her words might as well not have been spoken.

"You'd better have your luggage ready for a quick start."

"Will it be soon?"

"It may be."

"How shall we know?"

"I will get word to you."

"Bring it?"

He shook his head.

"No; I fear not. This is good-by."

"You're very casual about it," she

said, aggrieved. "At least, it would be polite to pretend."

"What am I to pretend?"

"To be sorry. Aren't you sorry? Just a little bit?"

"Yes; I'm sorry. Just a little bit—at least."

"I'm most awfully sorry myself," she said frankly. "I shall miss you."

"As a curiosity?" he asked, smiling.

"As a friend. You have been a friend to us—to me," she amended sweetly. "Each time I see you, I have more of the feeling that you've been more of a friend than I know."

"That which thy servant is," he quoted lightly. But beneath the lightness she divined a pain that she could not wholly fathom. Quite aware of her power, Miss Polly Brewster was now, for one of the few times in her life, stricken with contrition for her use of it.

"And I—I haven't been very nice," she faltered. "I'm afraid sometimes I've been quite horrid."

"You? You've been 'the glory and the dream'—I shall be needing memories for a while. And when the glory has gone, at least the dream will remain—tethered."

"But I'm not going to be a dream alone," she said, with wistful lightness. "It's far too much like being a ghost. I'm going to be a friend, if you'll let me. And I'm going to write to you, if you will tell me where. You won't find it so very easy to make a mere memory of me. And when you come home—When are you coming home?"

He shook his head.

"Then you must find out, and let me know. And you must come and visit us at our summer place, where there's a mountainside that we can sit on, and you can pretend that our lake is the Caribbean and hate it to your heart's content—"

"I don't believe I can ever quite hate the Caribbean again."

"From this view you mustn't, anyway. I shouldn't like that. As for our lake, nobody could really help loving it. So you must be sure and come, won't you?"

"Dreams!" he murmured.

"Isn't there room in the scientific life for dreams?"

"Yes. But not for their fulfillment."

"But there will be beetles and dragon flies on our mountain," she went on, conscious of talking against time, of striving to put off the moment of departure. "You'll find plenty of work there. Do you know, Mr. Beetle Man, you haven't told me a thing, really, about your work, or a thing, really, about yourself. Is that the way to treat a friend?"

"When I undertook to spread before you the true and veracious history of my life," he began, striving to make his tone light, "you would none of it."

"Are you determined to put me off? Do you think that I wouldn't find the things that are real to you interesting?"

"They're quite technical," he said shyly.

"But they are the big things to you, aren't they? They make life for you?"

"Oh, yes; that of course." It was as if he were surprised at the need of such a question. "I suppose I find the same excitement and adventure in research that other men find in politics, or war, or making money."

"Adventure?" she said, puzzled. "I shouldn't have supposed research an adventurous career, exactly."

"No; not from the outside." His hidden gaze shifted to sweep the far distances. His voice dropped and softened, and when he spoke again, she felt vaguely and strangely that he was hardly thinking of her or her question, except as a part of the great wonder world that surrounded and infolded their companioned remoteness.

"This is my *credo*," he said, and quoted, half under his breath:

"We have come in search of truth,
Trying with uncertain key
Door by door of mystery.
We are reaching, through His laws,
To the garment hem of Cause.
As with fingers of the blind,
We are groping here to find
What the hieroglyphics mean
Of the Unseen in the seen;
What the Thought which underlies
Nature's masking and disguise;
What it is that hides beneath
Blight and bloom and birth and death."

Other men had poured poetry into Polly Brewster's ears—many others—and she had thought them vapid or priggish or affected, according as they had chosen this or that medium. This man was different. For all his outer grotesquerie, the noble simplicity of the verse matched some veiled, hitherto but half-expressed quality within him, and dignified him. Miss Brewster suffered the strange, but not wholly unpleasant, sensation of feeling herself dwindle.

"It's very beautiful," she said, with an effort. "Is it Matthew Arnold?"

"Nearer home. You an American, and don't know your Whittier? That passage from his 'Agassiz' comes pretty near to being my *credo*. Have I answered your requirements?"

"Fully and finely."

She rose from the rock upon which she had been seated, and stretched out both hands to him. He took and held them without awkwardness or embarrassment. By that alone she could have known that he was suffering with a pain that submerged consciousness of self.

"Whether I see you again or not, I'll never forget you," she said softly. "You *have* been good to me, Mr. Perkins."

"I like the other name better," he said.

"Of course. Mr. Beetle Man." She laughed a little tremulously. Abruptly

she stamped a determined foot. "I'm not going away without having seen my friend for once. Take off your glasses, Mr. Beetle Man."

"Too much radiance is bad for the microscopical eye."

"The sun is under a cloud."

"But you're here, and you'd glow in the dark."

"No; I'm not to be put off with pretty speeches. Take them off. Please!"

Releasing her hand, he lifted off the heavy and disfiguring apparatus and stood before her, quietly submissive to her wish. She took a quick step backward, stumbled, and thrust out a hand against the face of the giant rock for support.

"Oh!" she cried, and again, "Oh, I didn't think you'd look like that!"

"What is it? Is there anything very wrong with me?" he asked seriously, blinking a little in the soft light.

"No, no. It isn't that. I—I hardly know—I expected something different. Forgive me for being so—so stupid."

In truth, Miss Polly Brewster had sustained a shock. She had become accustomed to regard her beetle man rather more in the light of a beetle than a man. In fact, the human side of him had impressed her only as a certain dim appeal to sympathy; the masculine side had simply not existed. Now it was as if he had unmasked. The visage, so grotesque and gnomish behind its mechanical apparatus, had given place to a wholly different and formidably strange face. The change all centered in the eyes. They were wide-set eyes of the clearest, steadiest, and darkest gray she had ever met; and they looked out at her from sharply angled brows with a singular clarity and calmness of regard. In their light the man's face became instinct with character in every line. Strength was there, self-control, dignity, a glint of humor in the little wrinkles at the cor-

ners of the mouth, and, withal, a sort of quiet and sturdy beauty.

She had half turned her face from him. Now, as her gaze returned and was fixed by his, she felt a wave of blood expand her heart, rush upward into her cheeks, and press into her eyes tears of swift regret. But now she was sorry not for him, but for herself, because he had become remote and difficult to her.

"Have I startled you?" he asked curiously. "I'll put them back on again."

"No, no; don't do that!" She rallied herself to the point of laughing a little. "I'm a goose. You see, I've pictured you as quite different. Have you ever seen yourself in the glass with those dreadful disguises on?"

"Why, no; I don't suppose I have," he replied, after reflection. "After all, they're meant for use, not for ornament."

By this time she had mastered her confusion and was able to examine his face. Under his eyes were circles of dull gray, defined by deep lines.

"Why, you're worn out!" she cried pitifully. "Haven't you been sleeping?"

"Not much."

"You must take something for it." The mothering instinct sprang to the rescue. "How much rest did you get last night?"

"Let me see. Last night I did very well. Fully four hours."

"And that is more than you average?"

"Well, yes; lately. You see, I've been pretty busy."

"Yet you've given up your time to my wretched, unimportant little stupid affairs! And what return have I made?"

"You've made the sun shine," he said, "in a rather shaded existence."

"Promise me that you'll sleep tonight—that you won't work a stroke."

"No; I can't promise that."

"You'll break down. You'll go to pieces. What have you got to do more important than keeping in condition?"

"As to that, I'll last through. And there's some business that won't wait."

Divination came upon her.

"Dad's message!"

"If it weren't that, it would be something else."

Her hand went out to him, and was withdrawn.

"Please put on your glasses," she said shyly.

Smiling, he did her bidding.

"There! Now you are my beetle man again. No, not quite, though. You'll never be quite the same beetle man again."

"I shall always be," he contradicted gently.

"Anyway, it's better. You're easier to say things to. Are you really the man who ran away from the street car?" she asked doubtfully.

"I really am."

"Then I'm most surely sure that you had good reason." She began to laugh softly. "As for the stories about you, I'd believe them less than ever, now."

"Are there stories about me?"

"Gossip of the club. They call you the unspeakable Perk!"

"Not a bad nickname," he admitted. "I expect I have been rather unspeakable, from their point of view."

A desire to have the faith that was in her supported by this man's own word overrode her shyness.

"Mr. Beetle Man," she said, "have you got a sister?"

"I? No. Why?"

"If you had a sister, is there anything— Oh, *darn* your sister!" broke forth the irrepressible Polly. "I'll be your sister for this. Is there anything about you and your life here that you'd be afraid to tell me?"

"No."

"I knew there wasn't," she said contentedly. She hesitated a moment, then

put a hand on his arm. "Does this *have* to be good-by, Mr. Beetle Man?" she said wistfully.

"I'm afraid so."

"No!" She stamped imperiously. "I want to see you again, and I'm going to see you again. Won't you come down to the port and bring me another bunch of your mountain orchids when we sail—just for good-by?"

Through the dull medium of the glasses she could feel his eyes questioning hers. And she knew that once more before she sailed away, she must look into those eyes, in all their clarity and all their strength—and then try to forget them. The swift color ran up into her cheeks.

"I—I suppose so," he said. "Yes."

"Au revoir, then!" she cried, with a thrill of gladness, and fled up the rock.

The unspeakable Perk strode down his path, broke into a trot, and held to it until he reached his house. But Miss Polly, departing in her own direction, stopped dead after ten minutes' going. It had struck her forcefully that she had forgotten the matter of the expense of the message. How could she reach him? She remembered the cliff above the rock, and the signal. If a signal was valid in one direction, it ought to work equally well in the other. She had her automatic with her. Retracing her steps, she ascended the cliff, a rugged climb. Across the deep-fringed chasm she could plainly see the porch of the *quinta* with the little clearing at the side, dim in the clouded light. Drawing the revolver, she fired three shots.

"He'll come," she thought contentedly.

The sun broke from behind the obscuring cloud and sent a shaft of light straight down upon the clearing. It illuminated with pitiless distinctness the shimmering silk of a woman's dress, hanging on a line and waving in the first draft of the evening breeze. For a mo-

ment Polly stood transfixed. What did it mean? Was it perhaps a servant's dress? No; he had told her that there was no woman servant.

As she sought the solution, a woman's figure emerged from the porch of the *quinta*, crossed the compound, and dropped upon a bench. Even at that distance, the watcher could tell from the woman's bearing and apparel that she was not of the servant class. She seemed to be gazing out over the mountains; there was something dreary and forlorn in her attitude. What, then, did she do in the beetle man's house?

Below the rock the shrubbery waved and thrashed, and the person who could best answer that question burst into view at a full lope.

"What is it?" he panted. "Was it you who fired?"

She stared at him mutely. The revolver hung in her hand. In a moment he was beside her.

"Has anything happened?" he began again, then turned his head to follow the direction of her regard. He saw the figure in the compound.

"Good God in heaven!" he groaned.

He caught the revolver from her hand and fired three slow shots. The woman turned. Snatching off his hat, he signaled violently with it. The woman rose and, as it seemed to Polly Brewster, moved in humble submissiveness back to the shelter.

White consternation was stamped on the unspeakable Perk's face as he handed the revolver to its owner.

"Do you need me?" he asked quickly. "If not, I must go back at once."

"I do not need you," said the girl, in level tones. "You lied to me."

His expression changed. She read in it the desperation of guilt.

"I can explain," he said hurriedly, "but not now. There isn't time. Wait here. I'll be back. I'll be back the instant I can get away."

As he spoke, he was halfway down

the rock, headed for the lower trail. The bushes closed behind him.

Painfully Polly Brewster made her way down the treacherous footing of the cliff path to her place on the rock. From her bag she drew one of her cards, wrote slowly and carefully a few words, found a dry stick, set it between two rocks, and pinned her message to it. Then she ran, as helpless humans run from the scourge of their own hearts.

Half an hour later the hermit, sweat-covered and breathless, returned to the rock. For a moment he gazed about, bewildered by the silence. The white card caught his eye. He read:

I wish never to see you again. Never! Never! Never!

A sulphur-yellow inquisitor, of a more insinuating manner than the former participant in their conversation, who had been examining the message on his own account, flew to the top of the cliff.

"*Qu'est-ce qu'elle dit? Qu'est-ce qu'elle dit?*" he demanded.

For the first time in his adult life the beetle man threw a stone at a bird.

CHAPTER VIII.

Luncheon on the day following the kiskadee bird's narrow squeak for his life was a dreary affair for Mr. Fitzhugh Carroll. Business had called Mr. Brewster away. This deprivation the Southerner would have borne with equanimity. But Miss Brewster had also absented herself, which was rather too much for the devoted, but apprehensive, lover. Thus, ample time was given him to consider how ill his suit was prospering. The longer he stayed, the less he saw of Miss Polly. That she was kinder and more gentle, less given to teasing him than of yore, was poor compensation. He was shrewd enough to draw no good augury from that. Something had altered her, and

he was divided between suspicion of the last week's mail, the arrival of which had been about contemporaneous with her change of spirit, and some local cause. Was a letter from Smith, the millionaire, or Bobby, the friend of her childhood, responsible? Or was the cause nearer at hand?

For one preposterous moment he thought of the unspeakable Perk. A quick visualization of that gnomish, froggish face was enough to dispel the suspicion. At least the petted and rather fastidious Miss Brewster's fancy would be captured only by a gentleman, not by any such homunculus as the mountain dweller. Her interest, perhaps; the man possessed the bizarre attraction of the freakish. But anything else was absurd. And the knight was inclined to attain his lady for a certain cruelty in the matter; she was something less than fair to the unspeakable Perk.

The searchlight of his surmise ranged farther. Raimonda! The young Caracúñan was handsome, distinguished, manly, with a romantic charm that the American did not underestimate. He, at least, was a gentleman, and the assiduity of his attentions to the Northern beauty had become the joke of the clubs—except when Raimonda was present. By the same token, half of the gilded youth of the capital, and most of the young diplomats, were the sworn slaves of the girl. It was a confused field, indeed. Well, thank Heaven, she would soon be out of it! Word had come down from her that she was busy packing her things. Carroll wandered about the hotel, waiting for the news that would explain this preparation.

It came, at mid-afternoon, in the person of Miss Polly herself. Why packing trunks, with the aid of an experienced maid, should, even in a hot climate, produce heavy circles under the eyes, a droop at the mouth corners, and

a complete submersion of vivacity, is a problem that Carroll then and there gave up. He had too much tact to question or comment.

"Oh, I'm so tired!" she said, giving him her hand. "Have you much packing to do, Fitzhugh?"

"No one has given me any notice to get ready, Miss Polly."

"How very neglectful of me! We may leave at any time."

"Yes; you may. But my ship doesn't seem to be coming in very fast."

The *double entente* was unintentional, but the girl winced.

"Aren't you coming with us on the yacht?"

"Am I?" His handsome face lighted hopefully.

"Of course. Dad expects you to. What kind of people should we be to leave any friend behind, with matters as they are?"

"Ah, yes." The hope passed out of his face. "Dictates of humanity, and that sort of thing. I think, if you and Mr. Brewster——"

"Please don't be silly, Fitz," she pleaded. "You know it would make me most unhappy to leave you."

Rarely did the scion of Southern blood and breeding lose the self-control and reserve on which he prided himself, but he had been harassed by events to an unwonted strain of temper.

"Is it making you unhappy to leave any one else here?" he blurted out.

The challenge stirred the girl's spirit.

"No, indeed! I wouldn't care if I never saw any of them again. I'm tired of it all. I want to go home," she said, like a pathetic child.

"Oh, Miss Polly," he began, taking a step toward her, "if you'd only——"

She put up one little sunburned hand.

"Please, Fitz! I—I don't feel up to it to-day."

Humbly he subsided.

"I'd no right to ask you the question,"

he apologized. "It was kind of you to answer me at all."

"You're really a dear, Fitz," she said, smiling a little wanly. "Sometimes I wish—"

She did not finish her sentence, but wandered over to the window, and gazed out across the square. On the far side something quite out of the ordinary seemed to be going on.

"The legless beggar seems to have collected quite an audience," she remarked idly.

Her suitor joined her on the parlor balcony.

"Possibly he's starting a revolution. Any one can do it down here."

Vehement adjuration, in a high, strident voice, came floating across to them.

"Listen!" cried the girl. "He's speaking English, isn't he?"

"It seems to be a mixture of English, French, and Spanish. Quite a polyglot the friend of your friend Perkins appears to be."

She turned steady eyes upon him.

"Mr. Perkins is not my friend."

"No?"

"I never want to see him or to hear his name again."

"Ah, then you've found out about him?"

"Yes." She flushed. "Yes—at least— Yes," she concluded.

"He admitted it to you?"

"No, he lied about it."

"I think I shall go up and make a call on Mr. Perkins," said Carroll, with formidable quiet.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," she answered wearily. "He'd only run away and hide." As she said it, her inner self convicted her tongue of lying.

"Very likely. Yet see here, Miss Polly—I want to be fair to that fellow. It doesn't follow that because he's a coward he's a cad."

"He isn't a coward!" she flashed.

"You just said yourself that he'd run and hide."

"Well, he wouldn't, and he *is* a cad."

"As you like. In any case, I shall make it a point to see him before I leave. If he can explain, well and good. If not—" He did not conclude.

"Our orator seems to have finished," observed the girl. "I shall go back upstairs and write some good-by notes to the kind people here."

"Just for curiosity, I think I'll drive across and look at the legless Demosthenes," said her companion. "I was going to do a little shopping, anyway. So I'll report, later, if he's revolving or anything exciting."

From her own balcony, when she reached it, Polly had a less obstructed view of the beggar's appropriated corner, and she looked out a few minutes after she reached the room to see whether he had resumed his oratory. Apparently he had not, for the crowd had melted away. The legless one was rocking himself monotonously upon his stumps. His head was sunk forward, and from his extraordinary mouthing the spectator judged that he must be talking to himself with resumed vehemence. From what next passed before her astonished vision, Miss Brewster would have suspected herself of an hallucination of delirium had she not been sure of normal health.

One of the well-horsed, elegant little public victorias with which the city is so well supplied stopped at the curb, and the handsome head of Preston Fairfax Fitzhugh Carroll was thrust forth. At almost the same moment the unspeakable Perk appeared upon the steps. He was wearing a pair of enormous, misfit white gloves. He went down to the beggar, reached forth a hand, and, to the far-away spectator's wonder-struck interpretation, seemed to thrust something, presumably a document, into the breast of the mendicant's

shirt. Having performed this strange rite, he leaped up the steps, hesitated, rushed over to Carroll's equipage, and laid violent hands upon the occupant, with obvious intent to draw him forth. For a moment they seemed to struggle upon the sidewalk; then both rushed upon the unfortunate beggar and proceeded to kidnap him and thrust him bodily into the cab.

The driver turned in his seat at this point, his cue in the mad farce having been given, and opened speech with many gestures, whereupon Carroll arose and embraced him warmly. And with this grouping, the vehicle, bearing its lunatic load, sped around the corner and disappeared, while the sole interested witness retired to obscurity, with her reeling head between her hands.

One final touch of phantasy was given to the whole affair when, two hours later, she met Carroll, soiled and grimy, coming across the plaza, smoking—he, the addict to thirty-cent Havanas—an awful native cheroot, whose incense spread desolation about him, and essayed to obtain a solution of the mystery from him; only to have him repulse her with emphatic gestures and a few half-strangled words with whose unintelligibility the cheroot fumes may have had some connection, and hurry into the hotel, where he remained in seclusion the rest of the day.

What in the name of all the wonders could it mean? On Mr. Brewster's return, she laid the matter before him at the dinner table.

"Touch of the sun, perhaps," he hazarded. "Nothing else I know of would explain it."

"Do two Americans, a half-breed beggar and a local coachman, get sunstruck at one and the same time?" she inquired disdainfully.

"Doesn't seem likely. By your account, though, the crippled beggar seems to have been the little Charlie Ross of the melodrama."

"Then why didn't he shout for help? I listened, but didn't hear a sound from him."

"Movie-picture rehearsal," grunted Mr. Brewster. "I can't quite see the heir of all the Virginias in the part. Isn't he coming down to dinner this evening?"

"His dinner was sent up to his room. Isn't it extraordinary?"

"Ask Sherwen about it. He's coming around this evening for coffee in our rooms."

But the American representative had something else on his mind besides casual kidnapings.

"I've just come from a talk with the British minister," he remarked, setting down his cup. "He's officially in charge of American interests, you know."

"Thought you were," said Mr. Brewster.

"Officially, I have no existence. The United States of America is wiped off the map, so far as the sovereign Republic of Caracuna is concerned. Some of its politicians wouldn't be overgrieved if the local Americans underwent the same process. The British minister would, I'm sure, sleep easier if you were all a thousand miles away from here."

"Tell Sir Willet that he's very ungalant," pouted Miss Polly. "When I sat next to him at dinner last week, he offered to establish woman suffrage here and elect me next president if I'd stay."

Sherwen hardly paid this the tribute of a smile.

"That was before he found out certain things. The Hochwald legation"—he lowered his voice—"is undoubtedly stirring up anti-American sentiment."

"But why?" inquired Mr. Brewster. "There's enough trade for them and for us?"

"For one thing, they don't like your concessions, Mr. Brewster. Then they have heard that Doctor Pruyn is on his way, and they want to make all the

trouble they can for him, and make it impossible for him to get actual information of the presence of plague. I happen to know that their consul is officially declaring fake all the plague rumors."

"That suits me," declared the magnate. "We don't want to have to run Dutch and quarantine blockade both."

"Meantime, there are two or three cheap, but dangerous demagogues who have been making anti-Yankee, as they call us, speeches in the slums. Sir Willet doesn't like the looks of it. If there were any way in which you could get through, and to sea, it would be well to take it at once. Am I correct in supposing that you've taken steps to clear the yacht, Mr. Brewster?"

"Yes. That is, I've sent a message. Or, at least, so my daughter, to whose management I left it, believes."

"Don't tell me how," said Sherwen quickly. "There is reason to believe that it has been dispatched."

"You've heard something?"

"I have a message from our consul at Puerto del Norte, Mr. Wisner."

"For me?" asked the concessionaire.

"Why, no," was the hesitant reply. "It isn't quite clear, but it seems to be for Miss Brewster."

"Why not?" inquired that young lady coolly. "What is it?"

"The best I could make of it over the phone—Wisner had to be guarded—was that people planning to take Dutch leave would better pay their parting calls by to-morrow at the latest."

"That would mean day after to-morrow, wouldn't it?" mused the girl.

"If it means anything at all," substituted her father testily.

"Meantime, how do you like the Gran Hotel Kast, Miss Brewster?" asked Sherwen.

"It's awful beyond words! I've done nothing but wish for a brigade of Biddies, with good stout mops, and a gov-

ernment permit to clean up. I'd give it a bath!"

"Yes, it's pretty bad. I'm glad you don't like it."

"Glad? Is every one agin' poor me?"

"Because—well, the American legation is a very lonely place. Now, the presence of an American lady—"

"Are you offering a proposal of marriage, Mr. Sherwen?" twinkled the girl. "If so—— Dad, please leave the room."

"Knock twenty years off my battle-scarred life and you wouldn't be safe a minute," he retorted. "But no. This is a measure of safety. Sir Willet thinks that your party ought to be ready to move into the American legation on instant notice, if you can't get away to sea to-morrow."

"What's the use, if the legation has no official existence?" asked Mr. Brewster.

"In a sense it has. It would probably be respected by a mob. And, at the worst, it adjoins the British legation, which would be quite safe. If it weren't that Sir Willet's boy has typhoid, you'd be formally invited to go there."

"It's very good of you," said Miss Polly warmly. "But surely it would be an awful nuisance to you!"

"On the contrary, you'd brace up my far-too-casual old housekeeper and get the machinery running. She constantly takes advantage of my bachelor ignorance. If you say you'll come, I'll almost pray for the outbreak."

"Certainly we'll come, at any time you notify us," said Mr. Brewster. "And we're very grateful. Shall you have room for Mr. Carroll, too?"

"By all means. And I've notified Mr. Cluff. You won't mind his being there? He's a rough diamond, but a thoroughly decent fellow."

"Useful, too, in case of trouble, I should judge," said the magnate. "Then I'll wait for further word from you."

"Yes. I've got my men out on watch."

"Wouldn't it be—er—advisable for us to arm ourselves?"

"By no means! There's just one course to follow—keep the peace at any price, and give the Hochwaldians not the slightest peg on which to hang a charge that Americans have been responsible for any trouble that might arise. May I ask you," he added significantly, "to make this clear to Mr. Carroll?"

"Leave that to me," said Miss Brewster, with superb confidence.

"Content indeed! You'll find our locality very pleasant, Miss Brewster. Three of the other legations are on the same block, not including the Hochwaldian, which is a quarter of a mile down the hill. On our corner is a house where several of the English railroad men live, and across is the Club Amictia, made up largely of the *jeunesse dorée*, who are mostly pro-American. So you'll be quite surrounded by friends, not to say adherents."

"Call on me to housekeep for you at any time!" cried Polly gayly. "I'll begin to roll up my sleeves as soon as I get dressed to-morrow."

CHAPTER IX.

That weird three-part drama in the plaza which had so puzzled Miss Polly Brewster had developed in this wise:

Coincidently with the departure of Preston Fairfax Fitzhugh Carroll from the hotel in his cab, the unspeakable Perk emerged from a store near the far corner of the square, which exploited itself in the purest Castilian as offering the last word in the matter of gentlemen's apparel. "*Articulos para Caballeros*" was the representation held forth upon its signboard.

If it had articled Mr. Perkins, it must

be confessed that it had done its job unevenly, not to say fantastically. His linen was fresh and new, quite conspicuously so, and, therefore, in sharp contrast to the frayed and patched, but scrupulously clean and neatly pressed khaki suit, which set forth rather bumbily his solid figure. A serviceable pith helmet barely overhung the protrusive goggles. His hands were incased in white cotton gloves, a size or two too large. Dismal buff spots on the palms impaired their otherwise virgin purity. As the wearer carried his hands stiffly splayed, the blemishes were obtrusive. Altogether, one might have said that, if he were going in for farce, he was appropriately made up for it.

At the corner above the beggar's niche he was turning toward a pharmacist's entrance when the mirth of the departing crowd that had been enjoying the free oratory attracted his attention. He glanced across at the beggar, now rocking rhythmically on his stumps, hesitated a moment, then ran down the steps.

At the same moment Carroll's cab stopped on the other angle of the curb. The occupant put forth his head, saw the goggled freak descending to the legless freak, and sat back again.

"Hola, Pancho! Are you ill?" asked the newcomer.

The beggar only swung back and forth, muttering with frenzied rapidity. With one hand the unspeakable Perk stopped him, as one might intercept the runaway pendulum of a clock, setting the other on his forehead. Then he bent and brought his goblin eyes to bear on the dark face. The features were distorted, the eyelids tremulous over suffused eyes, and the teeth set. Opening the man's loose shirt, Perkins thrust his hand within. It might have been supposed that he was feeling for the heart action, were it not that his hand slid past the breast and around under the arm. When he drew it out,

he stood for a moment with chin dropped, in consideration.

Midday heat had all but cleared the plaza. As he looked about, the helper saw no aid, until his eye fell upon the waiting cab. He fairly bounded up the stairs, calling something to the coachman.

"No," said that toiler, with the characteristic courtesy of the Caracuanian lower class, and jerked his head backward toward his fare.

"I beg your pardon," said the unspeakable Perk eagerly, in Spanish, turning to the dim recess of the victoria. "Might I— Oh, it's you!" He seized Carroll by the arm. "I want your cab."

"Indeed!" said Carroll. "Well, you're cool enough about it."

"And your help," added the other.

"What for?"

"Do you have to ask questions? The man may be dying—is dying, I think."

"All right," said Carroll promptly. "What's to be done?"

"Get him home. Help me carry him to the cab."

Between them, the two men lifted the heavy mumbling cripple, carried him up the steps with a rush, and deposited him in the cab, while the driver was still angrily expostulating. The beggar was shivering now, and the cold sweat rolled down his face. His bearers placed themselves on each side of him. Perkins gave an order to the driver, who seemed to object, and a rapid-fire argument ensued.

"What's wrong?" asked Carroll.

"Says he won't go there. Says he was hired by you for shopping."

Carroll took one look at the agony-wrung face of the beggar, who was being held on the seat by his companion.

"Won't he?" said he grimly. "We'll see."

Rising, he threw a pair of long arms around those of the driver, pin-

ning him, caught the reins, and turned the horses.

"Now ask him if he'll drive," he directed Perkins.

"*Si, señor!*" gasped the coachman, whose breath had been squeezed almost through his crackling ribs.

"See that you do," the Southerner bade him, in accents that needed no interpretation.

Presently Perkins looked up from his charge.

"Got a cigar?" he asked abruptly.

"No," replied the other, a little disgusted by this levity in the presence of imminent death.

Perkins bade the driver stop at the corner.

"Don't let him fall off the seat," he admonished Carroll, and jumped out.

In the course of a minute he reappeared, smoking a cheroot that appeared to be writhing and twisting in the effort to escape from its own noxious fumes.

"Have one," he said, extending a handful to his companion.

"I don't care for it," returned the other superciliously. He did not in the least approve either of the unspeakable Perk or of his offhand manners.

Before they'd gone much farther, his resentment was heated to the point of offense.

"Is it necessary for you to puff every puff of that infernal smoke in my face?" he demanded ominously.

"Well, you wouldn't smoke yourself."

"If it weren't for this poor devil of a sick man—" began Carroll, when a second thought about the smoke diverted his line of thought. "Is it contagious?" he asked.

"It's so regarded," observed the other dryly.

"I'll take one of those, thank you."

Perkins handed him one of the rejected spirals. In silence, except for the outrageous rattling of the wheels on the cobbles, they drove through

mean streets that grew ever meaner, until they drew up at the blind front of a building abutting on an arroyo of the foothills. Here they stopped, and Carroll threw his jehu a five-bolivar piece, which the driver caught, driving away at once, without the demand for more that usually follows overpayment in Caracúña. Convenient to hand lay a small rock. Perkins used it for a knocker, hammering on the guarded wooden door with such vehemence as to still the clamor that arose from within.

Through the opening, as the barrier was removed by a leather-skinned old crone, Carroll gazed into a passageway, beyond which stretched a foul mule yard, bordered by what the visitor at first supposed to be stalls, until he saw bedding and utensils in them. The two men lifted the cripple in, amid the outcries and lamentations of the aged woman, who had looked at his face and then covered her own. At once they were surrounded by a swarm of women and children, who pressed upon them, hampering their movements, until a shrill voice cried:

"La muerte negra!"

The swarm fell into silence, scattered, vanished, leaving only the moaning woman to help. At her direction they settled the patient on a straw pallet in a side room.

"That's all you can do," said the unspeakable Perk to his companion. "And thank you."

"I'll stay."

The goggles gloomed upon him in the dim room.

"I thought probably you would," commented Perkins, and busied himself over the cripple with a knife and some cloths. He had stuffed his ludicrous white gloves into his pocket, and was tearing strips from his handkerchief with skillful fingers.

"Oughtn't he to have a doctor?" asked Carroll. "Shall I go for one?"

"His mother has sent. No use, though."

"He can't be saved?"

"Not a chance on earth. I should say he was in the last stages."

"What is it?" said Carroll hesitantly. "Plague?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure? Are you an expert?"

"One doesn't have to be to recognize a case like that. The lump in the arm-pit is as big as a pigeon's egg."

"Why have you interested yourself in the man to such an extent?" asked Carroll curiously.

"He's a friend of mine. Why did you?"

"Oh, that's quite different. One can't disregard a call for help such as yours."

"A certain kind of 'one' can't," returned the unspeakable Perk, with his half smile. "You don't mind my saying, Mr. Carroll, you're a brave man."

"And I'd have said that you weren't," replied the other bluntly. "I give it up. But I know this—I'm going to be pretty wretchedly frightened until I know that I haven't got it. I'm frightened now."

"Then you're a braver man than I thought. But the danger may be less than you think. Stick to that cigar—here are two more—and wait for me outside. Here's the doctor."

Profound and solemn under a silk hat, the local physician entered, bowing to Carroll as they passed in the hallway. Almost immediately Perkins emerged. On his face was a sardonic grin.

"Malaria," he observed. "The learned professor assures me that it's a typical malaria."

"Then it isn't the plague," said Carroll, relieved.

His relief was of brief duration.

"Of course it's plague. But if Professor Silk Hat, in there, officially declared it that, he'd have bracelets on his arms in twelve hours. The present

government of Caracuña doesn't believe in bubonic plague. I fancy our unfortunate friend in there will presently disappear, either just before or just after death. It doesn't greatly matter."

"What is to be done now?" asked Carroll.

"See that brush fire up there?" The hermit pointed to the hillside. "If we steep ourselves in that smoke until we choke, I think it will discourage any fleas that may have harbored on us. The flea is the only agent of communication."

Soot-begrimed, strangling, and with streaming eyes, they emerged, five minutes later, from the cloud of smoke. From his pocket the unspeakable Perk dragged forth his white gloves. The action attracted his companion's attention.

"Good Lord!" he cried. "What has happened to your hands?"

"They're blistered."

"Stripped, rather! They look as if you'd fallen into a fire, or rowed a fifty-mile race. That message of Mr. Brewster's— See here, Perkins, you didn't row that over to the mainland? No, you couldn't. That's absurd. It's too far."

"No, I didn't row it to the mainland."

"But you've been rowing. I'd swear to those hands. Where? The blockading Dutch warship?"

The other nodded.

"Last night. Yah-h-h!" he yawned. "It makes me sleepy to think of it."

"Why didn't they blow you out of the water?"

"Oh, I was semiofficially expected. Message from our consul. They transferred the message by wireless. I'm telling you all this, Mr. Carroll, because I think you'll get your release within forty-eight hours, and I want you to see that some of your party keeps constantly in touch with Mr. Sherwen. It's mighty important that

your party should get out before plague is officially declared."

"Are you going to report this case?"

"All that I know about it."

"But, of course, you can't report officially, not being a physician," mused the other. "Still, when Doctor Pruyne comes, it will be evidence for him, won't it?"

"Undoubtedly. I should consider any delay after twenty-four hours risky for your party."

"What shall you do? Stay?"

"Oh, I've my place in the mountains. That's remote enough to be safe. Thank Heaven there's a cloud over the sun! Let's sit down for a minute."

Unthinkingly, as he stretched himself out, the unspeakable Perk pushed his goggles back and presently slipped them off. Thus, when Carroll, who had been gazing at the mist-capped peak of the mountain in front, turned and met his companion's eyes, he underwent something of the same shock that Polly Brewster had experienced, though the nature of his sensation was profoundly different. But his impression of the suddenly revealed face was the same. Ribbed in though his mind was with tradition, and distorted with falsely focused ideals and prejudices, Preston Fairfax Fitzhugh Carroll possessed a sound underlying judgment of his fellow man, and was at bottom a frank and honorable gentleman. In his belief, the face of the man beside him came near to being its own guarantee of honor and good faith.

"By heavens, I don't believe it!" he blurted out, his gaze direct upon the unspeakable Perk.

"What don't you believe?"

"That rotten club gossip."

"About me?"

"Yes," said Carroll, reddening.

The hermit pushed his glasses down, settled into place the white gloves, with their soothing contents of emollient greases, and got to his feet.

"We'd best be moving. I've got much to do," he said.

"Not yet," retorted Carroll. "Perkins, is there a woman up there on the mountains with you?"

"That is purely my own business."

"You told Miss Brewster there wasn't. If you tell me—"

"I never told her any such thing. She misunderstood."

"Who is the woman?"

"If you want it even more frankly, that is none of your concern."

"You have been letting Miss Brewster—"

"Are you engaged to marry Miss Brewster?"

"No."

"Then you have no authority to question me. But," he added wearily, "if it will ease your mind, and because of what you've done to-day, I'll tell you this—that I do not expect ever to see Miss Brewster again."

"That isn't enough," insisted Carroll, his face darkening. "Her name has already been connected with yours, and I intend to follow this through. I am going to find out who the woman is."

"How do you propose to do it?"

"By coming to see."

"You'll be welcome," said the other grimly. "By the way, here's a map." He made a quick sketch on the back of an envelope. "I'll be there at work most of to-morrow. Au revoir." He rose and started down the hill. "Better keep to yourself this evening," he warned. "Take a dilute carbolic bath. You'll be all right, I think."

Slowly and thoughtfully the Southerner made his way back to the hotel. After dining in his own room, he found time heavy on his hands; so, dispatching a note of excuse to Miss Brewster on the plea of personal business, he slipped out into the street. Wandering idly toward the hills, he presently

found himself in a familiar street, and, impelled by human curiosity, proceeded to turn up the hill and stop opposite the blank door.

Here he was puzzled. To go in and inquire, even if he cared to and could make himself understood, would perhaps involve further risk of infection. While he was considering, the door slowly opened, and the leather-skinned crone appeared. Her eyes were swollen. In her hand she carried a travesty of a wreath, done in whitish metal, which she had interwoven with her own black mantilla, the best substitute for crape at hand. This she undertook to hang on the door.

As Carroll crossed to address her, a powerful sullen-faced man, with a scarred forehead and the insignia of some official status, apparently civic, on his coat, emerged from a doorway and addressed her harshly. She raised her reddened eyes to him and seemed to be pleading for permission to set up that little tribute to her dead. There was the exchange of a few more words. Then, with an angry exclamation, the official snatched the wreath from her. Carroll's hand fell on his shoulder. The man swung and saw a stranger of barely half his bulk, who addressed him in what seemed to be politely remonstrant tones. He shook himself loose and threw the wreath in the crone's face. Then he went down like a log under the compact of a swinging blow behind the ear. With a roar he leaped up and rushed. The foreigner met him with right and left, and this time he lay still.

Hanging the tragically unsightly wreath on the door, through which the terrified mourner had vanished, Carroll returned to the Gran Hotel Kast, his perturbed and confused thoughts and emotions notably relieved by that one comforting moment of action.



The Vanishing Lady

By F. Berkeley Smith

Author of "A Village of Vagabonds," etc.

CHANCE found Doctor Brampton and me at the Grand Hotel at Idleweis-les-Bains, and war eventually kept us there, "stranded" with other Americans, despite a letter of credit and a check book, neither of which proved to be negotiable in cash for as much as a draft of milk drawn at sight on an alpine goat.

There are few more interesting men to meet in this wide world than my old friend, Doctor Alexander V. Brampton. It is surprising that this distinguished American, whose expert opinion in chemistry and physics is held as high authority by scientists on both sides of the Atlantic, is still a young man barely turned forty. Tall, erect, and wiry, interested as a boy in everything, his keen black eyes search your own with inviting intelligence, and his smile captivates you because it is sincere—as genuine as his modesty and as true as the strange tale that follows, whose beginning dates back to those peaceful days before the declaration of hostilities.

The season at Idleweis had opened brilliantly; the costume dance had been a huge success, and to-night the prettily combined ballroom and theater of the hotel was filled with guests who had condescended to be mystified by "The Wizard of Up-to-date Magic—Poloff—presenting Mademoiselle Zarka—the Sensation."

Few people outside of the profession of legerdemain know anything of its secrets or the exceedingly ingenious, and often elaborate, mechanical devices used in the fine art of illusion.

If Brampton scanned Poloff's program to-night with a critical grin, as we took our seats together in the front row, he had good reason to; not that he had ever heard of the wizard in question, but because of the fact that, as an amusing diversion from weightier subjects, he had actually written a book about magic—a practical treatise on legerdemain, from the early days of Robert Houdin to the present time. Now this volume goes deep into the subject. It is characteristic of the man to have whiled away many months in its preparation, and typical of his modesty to have signed it anonymously.

Never had we seen a more typical figure of the conjurer of the old school than Poloff—evidently well past sixty, lean as a heron, his hair dyed black, brilliantined, and combed back from his senile forehead to curl well over the velvet collar of his long-tailed coat. The sharp satanic features and gaunt cheek bones, the short goatee and mustache waxed to needle points, the alert eyes shaded by two tufts of Mephistophelian eyebrows, the long, swarthy, vibrant hands, all marked him as the typical prestidigitateur—all save his work. He was a third-rate palmist,

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little more sure of himself as a card man, and a nervous, hesitant talker. And yet they stood for it—this smart audience of Idleweis-les-Bains, good-naturedly amazed, while Brampton and I marveled at the old stager's nerve in appearing at all, and waited with the rest through part first and the entr'acte for the promised "Zarka," not a glimpse of whom "Poloff the Great" had yet offered us.

People began to cough—a bad sign; an infectious tittering and giggling was started by the Stimson girls, spread through the row of débutantes, and was stopped by old Mrs. Stuyvesant Hooker on the end. Nothing ever gets by Mrs. Stuyvesant Hooker when her double chin stiffens beneath her thin red nose. She, like a few other prominent ladies in the hotel, it was rumored, carried her entire traveling fortune in a bulky chamois bag pinned in her petticoat, into which she was obliged to dive upon those unfortunate occasions when any of it was needed, and which was in such bulging evidence when she walked that you were reminded of the foolish ostrich who evades his pursuers by burying his head in the sand.

Finally the curtain rose, and Brampton and I settled back with a thirsty sigh and raised our eyes to a bare stage, stripped of everything to the wings and the back drop, showing the brick wall.

A second later we opened our eyes wide to beauty—sheer beauty! A young woman as graceful as a flower—as delicate, with her fresh pink-and-white skin, as a rose, and as lovely to gaze upon—glided, rather than stepped, down to the footlights, one small hand resting in Poloff's—a rosebud presented by a buzzard. So beautiful were her features that I scarcely noticed her lithe body half veiled beneath a filmy, iridescent gray-green gown that reached to her slim bare ankles. What my eyes were fixed upon were her own—large, fine, mischievous, smiling eyes, as blue

as azure and as almond-shaped as a houri's. Her hair—a rich auburn, framing the pure oval of her face—was brought down in little waves over her small pink ears. Her parted lips revealed in a smile of greeting her pearly teeth. Ah, she was something to look at! We shot forward in our seats and studied her shapely neck, her graceful arms, and, half rising, saw that her trim little feet were in sandals, a jeweled band spanning her pink toes.

I glanced at Brampton feasting his eyes; his face was a study. Then I was conscious for the first time that the old magician was speaking.

"Ladies and gentlemen of Idleweis," he began, in French with a strong German accent, "I repeat that Zarka is not an illusion. That which you are about to witness to-night will be enacted before you unaided by any confederate or apparatus of the profession. A stout packing box will be brought on the stage; you shall yourselves assist in imprisoning the lady in it; you shall see that it is securely nailed up. Mademoiselle Zarka will prove to you that you are poor jailers. She guarantees you that, in less than five minutes after you have left the stage, she will break free from the box and stand before you.

"Remember," went on Poloff, "I invite as many of you as can conveniently get upon this small stage to examine everything closely for yourselves. The ordinary packing box that Zarka will escape from will be carried from the cellar of the hotel to the stage by way of the audience. You may select the box yourselves, accompany it here, and examine it. Monsieur Pinard, the proprietor, will tell you that neither Mademoiselle Zarka nor I have ever seen it. Neither will I touch it. And the lady is entirely in your hands."

Monsieur Pinard—short, mild, and fat—rose and testified blushingly—it being his first speech in public; adding

in his embarrassment that Poloff had demanded as many carpenters as the hotel and the village afforded to nail up the lady securely.

"I shall ask you also, ladies and gentlemen, for a sheet, a rug, or a bed blanket," continued the magician, "anything of the kind, to lay under the box, to prove to you that the box you will imprison Zarka in will be completely isolated from the stage floor."

Here Zarka and Poloff descended to the audience. Brampton shot me a glance.

"Drake," he exclaimed, "the man's crazy! The thing's impossible! It's a joke! There's a catch in it!"

"Here's the box," said I, as it came down the center aisle on the shoulders of two porters—a stout packing case a cubic yard square, whose English shipping label read:

Grand Hotel. Idleweis. Gasoline engine No. 2.

The two porters let it down on the stage with a thud and stood aside and wiped their perspiring brows while three local carpenters and a volunteer committee of six from the audience, including Brampton and me, carefully examined it, top, bottom, and sides. A blanket was then brought, duly examined for slits and holes, and placed beneath it. Zarka, who had, during the entire operation, been standing with Poloff in the audience, at a signal from the committee, now ascended to the stage. We had finished our inspection; the carpenters stood ready. The box was deep, and I lifted her in.

Beautiful as she had been behind the footlights, she lost none of her loveliness at close range. Not a vestige of make-up had she used. A strand of her hair caught in my cuff links and she laughingly freed it, not, however, before I had passed my hand rapidly over the veillike gown in the hope of striking concealed apparatus. But I could discover nothing.

The original cover of planks was then fastened down upon her as she knelt in the bottom of the box, and the carpenters got to work. They were quick-moving and determined Frenchmen, and their long nails and screws drove straight and true into the stout wood.

This done, at the shouted suggestion of Poloff, they renailed and screwed as well top, bottom, and sides.

"This is the limit," muttered Brampton. "She can't get out without outside aid with a cold chisel."

As we all turned to leave the stage, I placed my ear to the box and listened. Not a sound. The box now, I knew, was practically sound-proof and air-tight.

"Are you all right?" I shouted.

I caught a faint, muffled "Yes" gasped back to me in English.

"One moment," called Poloff from the audience, as a guest squeezed his way down the middle aisle with a Japanese screen taken from the library. "Kindly place it in front of the box," Poloff requested.

I did so, and regained my seat next to Brampton.

Poloff whipped out his watch.

"In less than five minutes, Zarka will be free," he announced gravely.

"She'll smother," I declared to Brampton at the end of two minutes, but he did not reply. His eyes were fixed firmly on the stage, and his whole attitude, tense as mine, was that of a man undecided whether he was watching a trick or a murder. His breath came quick, the corners of his mouth twitching nervously.

Another long minute of suspense.

Brampton jerked around in his seat and started to rise.

"Damn him!" he cried.

"Sit down!" I insisted, but he wrenched his arm free from my grip, sprang to his feet, and started to denounce Poloff to the audience.

"I'm speaking to *you!*" he flashed out savagely at the old magician, who, to my horror, I saw face Brampton with so plain a look of nervous, half-terrified apology that it made my blood boil.

Cries of "Enough! Enough!" "Let her out!" "Ought not to be allowed!" came from various parts of the audience.

More seconds of suspense.

"Zarka!" Poloff's voice rang out suddenly in command. "Zarka! You are free!"

Scarcely had the words left him when there came the sound of wrenched nails and screws, and the sharp crack of shattered boards. The screen tottered and fell flat to the stage; a frail white hand appeared under the gaping box lid; with a whining creak its shattered planks rose; and the woman they had imprisoned stood before us, smiling, a trifle pale, with compressed lips, but with her veillike gown unruffled.

There came a quick burst of applause, and a sigh of relief swept over the entire audience. I caught her smiling, beckoning gaze.

"Kindly be amiable enough, monsieur, to help me out," she called to me in a gentle voice and the purest French.

But before I could move, Brampton sprang forward to assist her. When he regained his seat, he was trembling with wonder and excitement.

"Drake," said he, nervously fingering the oddly carved bit of green jade he always wore in his scarf, "we have just witnessed a miracle."

Idleweis-les-Bains awoke the next morning to grim and startling news. Even the amazing performance of Zarka was scarcely alluded to.

Those of you who have survived a collision at sea—the crash, the silence, the panicky realization of the truth,

and the assuring word of the captain to be calm, that "there is no immediate danger"—can better conceive the general state of mind at the Grand Hotel that sunny morning in August.

I cannot say that there was a panic, but the guests stood whispering in anxious groups in the corridors. The same gloom spread through the cozy smoking room into the bar. People who had not spoken to one another before now questioned one another for hopeful opinions. Why is it that a continental hotel in the height of the season always reminds one of a transatlantic liner high and dry on land? How many passenger lists have we thus seen anchored in Europe for the summer, waiting to be refloated to America—the same faces and conversations we have crossed with, the same steamer trunks lying outside the numbered doors waiting to bark one's shins, whether they be on "Deck B" or the first-floor front!

Very well—the collision had arrived. Not a soul believed it would, but it had; only in this case Germany was the iceberg. The shock was terrific. France was in arms, and all of England and Russia stood by to help her.

As for ourselves, we turned in our hour of need to our proprietor, Monsieur Pinard, his hospitality and his credit—both of which became with surprising rapidity extremely necessary.

By noon one man was missing. It was "Poloff."

He had vanished with every cent of Zarka's personal savings—leaving the lady to vanish for herself. After carefully depositing the shavings of his satanic mustache, goatee, and part of his brilliantined mane, in a newspaper, he had dropped it discreetly before daylight in a roadside ditch and struck out on foot to reach Evian and gain the neutral frontier of Switzerland, since for several affairs best known to the police and to himself—including deser-

tion from military duty—he dared not return to his native Germany.

Thus we saw no more of the old wizard with the Russian name, but we saw a great deal of Zarka.

She had appeared at luncheon; had explained her plight to the proprietor; had been spoken to by the Stimson girls, who spoke to everybody, and who had found her "charming"; had been consoled by young Mrs. Grimsby Jones, who never spoke to any one except her Pekingese and her maid; and had so ingratiated herself among us that the children rushed to her when they saw her, the men tried to flirt with her and found they couldn't, and even Mrs. Chisholm de Quincy Benedict invited her to tea.

As for Brampton, I had already noticed a peculiar change in him. He was too much of a man of the world to seek her companionship brusquely, keenly as I knew he was interested in the secret of her marvelous performance. Brampton is timid with women. Days passed with dozens of excellent chances to know her better, but he held aloof. Half a dozen formal "good mornings" and "good evenings" were, to my knowledge, the only words that passed between them, and these generally on the stairs. Many were the talks we had together over a possible solution of the miraculous box trick, but not a vestige of a conclusion could we come to.

"Come! Let's go all over it again," said he, as he flung himself into a chair in the smoking room one rainy afternoon. "No man living is strong enough, Drake, to break out of that box—much less a woman. We must therefore eliminate altogether the question of physical strength. Any mechanical, chemical, or dynamic means would have left its traces on the wood. That's why I minutely examined the box after the performance, and I found nothing, as you know, save the dam-

age done by the wrenched nails and screws."

"Perhaps it's an old Hindu secret," I ventured. "You've told me yourself there are several desert tricks of the fakirs that still remain a mystery—the vanishing monkey, for instance."

"You mean the old desert trick of the monkey on the ladder?" he smiled. "Or the monkey climbing a rope thrown in the air and vanishing with the rope? Pure hypnotism, my boy. The camera has proved that long ago."

"You can't hypnotize an entire audience," I declared.

"They can. I have the records and affidavits—a small group of witnesses, at least. The photographs prove that the monkey always stops halfway up the ladder, never higher than a man's reach, and is naturally palmed. I'm not speaking of tricks like that," he went on tensely. "They belong to another class. But it is a fact that there exist among the fakirs certain ingenious leverages of which we know nothing, and whose breaking force has been proved in the famous stone trick cited by Johnston in '68, and later seen by Rummell in the desert of Biskra in the early eighties. Some mysterious system of leverage is what I firmly believe is at the bottom of the secret of the box trick—but what? Any lever, or system of levers, she would have had to hide upon entering the box and upon leaving it. You helped her in and I helped her out—we discovered nothing."

"Yes," I smiled. "I lifted her in bodily. If that diaphanous gown of hers had hidden even a toothpick, I believe I should have discovered it."

He glanced up at me sharply.

"See here, Alex!" I exclaimed. "That scoundrel Poloff's gone. You've heard her story. She's penniless, poor girl, and in these times she's likely to remain so, without work and befriended by the hotel—practically a prisoner of

war, and a pauper, as far as ready cash goes, like the rest of us. Well, she might sell you the secret. She's not the kind to sell it for nothing—she'll ask a good stiff price for it, mark my word. Not a sou can be got from the bank here, but she might accept your check."

To my surprise, for a long moment he did not reply—just gazed at the floor. Finally he raised his eyes with an embarrassed, melancholy look in them that was strange in Brampton.

"What's the matter?" I asked, fearing I had said something that had offended him—though for the life of me I could not see what. "The girl's in a bad way. I can't conceive of a more useless possession than the box trick these times. There's no one to show it to—theaters closed and all gayety at an end. Legerdemain is not exactly what you might call a dire necessity—money is."

"I—I don't—much like what—you propose," he stammered sullenly. "I'm not the kind of a man, Drake, to take advantage of a woman's misfortune."

"But you'd be helping her!" I cried.

"Robbing her," he retorted, with sudden heat. "Robbing her of a secret that is her sole means of honorably earning her living. Frankly, Drake, your distinction among women—your—your venturing to— You're a shrewd lawyer, Drake. I haven't got in me, however, the instincts of a pawn-broker." He paused, gripping his chin and flushing to his temples. "Suppose we drop the subject."

I started back in my chair.

"If I've said anything to offend you, my old friend, I humbly beg your pardon," I apologized. "I don't quite understand you, Alex."

"Few people do," he returned coldly, tapping his bony fingers on the arm of his chair. "Come, let's forget it," and I saw the beginning of a forced smile seam the corners of his dark eyes.

"To show there is no hard feeling—" he added, and reached out for the bell on the smoking-room table between us, gravely summoning two whiskies and sodas, for which he started duly to sign. He dived into his pockets for a pencil, and in his hasty search snatched out a fistful of letters and a red Russian-leather portfolio, in which he finally found his pencil.

In his nervous haste, a small pasteboard card, unknown to him, slipped out of the red portfolio and fell at my feet. As he signed for the whiskies and sodas, I stooped to recover it, and as I bent lower, my eye caught the following inscription on the card in a feminine hand:

"A to A."

Recognizing that it was of a private nature, I carefully recovered the card, in the position in which it had lain. In straightening up, however, my hand struck the table's edge, and the card slipped from my fingers, fell, turned over, and landed face up—a small oval-shaped photograph. It was Zarka's.

The written words of lovers are brief. The more hopelessly in love, the briefer and more guarded are their confidences; nothing could have been briefer than "A to A." The four letters whispered a volume.

What I did upon recovering the tell-tale photograph was to hand it to him without a word, and what he did when he received it was to lay it face down on the table between us.

"Well," said he, with a tight smile, "there's no use in lying to you, Drake."

"Purely your own business," I told him. "I don't need to assure you, old man, that your secret is as safe with me—as safe as the secret of the box trick with Mademoiselle Zarka. Only go slow. When you've known as many women as I have, you *will* go slow; you'll go *exceedingly* slow. Meeting a woman is child's play in comparison to getting rid of her."

"Don't be conceited—and don't, for Heaven's sake, be a pessimist!" he exclaimed, feeling with his long, bony fingers, as was his wont when nervous, for the curious jade scarfpin he always wore. He gave a sudden twitch. The pin was not there. He stood up; felt of his clothing. He looked in his chair. He searched the floor.

"Perhaps you left it in your room," I suggested. "Perhaps—"

"I didn't," he snapped. "I always wear it. I—"

He broke off suddenly, and, face white as a sheet, strode from the room.

A rare and valuable bit of jade, no doubt, but such extraordinary agitation, particularly in a man like Brampton — With a shrug, I gave it up.

Adéle Steinhart—her stage name, "Zarka," was no longer mentioned among her many friends—became the most popular young woman in the hotel. She grew to be a favorite with old and young. The children adored her—she amused them with an astonishing number of tricks and games, and was never at a loss for a new one on the morrow. The elderly women called her "my dear." With untiring patience and unselfishness, she helped them with their fancywork, for she was marvelously skillful with a needle. Now and then a bedroom door ajar revealed her reading aloud to some bedridden grandmother or sewing for some other friend whose maid was ill.

"Do let me help you"—I can hear her sweet, cheery voice now, unmistakably the voice of a lady. Fool that I had been to misjudge her! I apologized humbly to Brampton. Had she not confessed to our good proprietor, Monsieur Pinard, that she was "Polloff's" daughter? And did not her papers of identity, signed by the prefecture of police at Paris, prove it, as well as her birth certificate? So much for fact—despicable as was her father. All

this good Pinard told me, and more—that he pitied her.

As for Brampton, there was no reasoning with him. Friends mean little to a man head over heels in love; they become a nuisance, and their advice an impertinence. One thing was certain—she held Brampton in check with an amazing skill, tempered with her firm, gentle manner and a frank insistence upon their remaining simply good comrades—a barrier that even he, with his brains and his impetuosity, failed to break down.

It was close on to midnight a week later when Adéle Steinhart slipped away from the bridge players in the salon and discovered my solitary figure on the veranda, stretched out in a steamer chair. And as I lay half asleep in the brilliant moonlight, her voice and her rapid step brought me up sharp and awake.

"Is that you, Mr. Drake?" she called again, gliding toward me in the shadow.

"Hello!" said I, springing up to greet her. "What luck? But I need not ask—you're always lucky at bridge, mademoiselle. You don't mean to say you've deserted it?"

"Had to. Bridge always gets on my nerves. It's simply stifling in there. If you knew how little I care for games! And they're still at it! What a superb night!"

"Come, my dear lady," said I, "take this chair and make yourself comfortable—and try," I laughed, "to keep awake. I'm fifty and harmless, but if you knew what a pleasure it is to find you really alone! Seen Brampton?"

"He's gone to see an old friend of his—the consul at Droux—on foot. Didn't he tell you?" she asked, settling herself in the chair.

"Not a word. To Droux, eh? On foot! Whew! Why, it's a good twenty kilometers there and back."

She turned and faced me with her glorious eyes.

"I feel very guilty, Mr. Drake. I begged him not to go, but he would. You—you see he went purely on my account. You're old friends, and I don't mind telling you why. It's about my passport. It seems that the consul is an old college mate of his—"

"You mean you've had trouble about getting your passport?" I interrupted.

"I'm afraid I *shall* have—a great deal," she confessed seriously, "if Doctor Brampton doesn't succeed. Wasn't it good of him?"

"I see," I mused, recalling the fact of her nationality. "But don't you worry about Brampton."

"I don't," she returned evenly. "I—I mean it is foolish of me to worry. He's on foot, you see—although they say the roads were never safer."

"Of course they're safe," I declared, as I settled myself cross-legged at her feet. "Far safer than in time of peace."

"You're most uncomfortable," she pleaded, leaning back and regarding me with a quizzical smile.

"It's perfect," I protested. "Don't worry about me. You don't know how comfy it is to talk to you alone."

A moment's silence. Then, as if to make conversation, she wondered:

"Has Doctor Brampton found his pin?"

"No," I said. "Strange. He's hunted high and low."

"He seemed to value it so. Some one very dear—— It must have been a gift," she reasoned, half to herself.

She lowered the lids of her wondrous eyes. Ah, the spell of those eyes! Or was it the moonlight that made me say, breaking a long silence between us:

"You're so wonderful! Really you are—truly wonderful!"

She laughed softly to herself, leaning slightly forward, her strong little hand within dangerous reach of my own.

"Yes," said I, "you are—wonderful. I'm in earnest—you *are!*"

"In what way?" she murmured.

"Oh, in lots of ways!" I declared, like a schoolboy.

Ah, the spell of women—of some women in the moonlight! Somehow I felt grateful for the shadow that divided her glorious beauty from me, for I am ugly and old. I lighted a cigarette, and my hand trembled as Brampton's hand had trembled when he had assisted her from the stage.

"If Mrs. Hooker should see me!" she said dreamily, as I offered her my cigarette case.

"You're in her chair," I laughed nervously, lifting for her inspection in the moonlight the original steamer tag that I had found dangling from the wicker arm.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed.

"She's a funny old party," said I, as she bent over the flame of a French match. "They say she's enormously rich. Millions in copper, I'm told."

"Don't gossip," she breathed.

"Forgive me. But I'm really not gossiping; I'm only telling you what I've heard—what half the hotel knows. We're all as poor as rats here—that is, for the moment—and when I think of a woman like Mrs. Stuyvesant Hooker hobbling about with a sack of ready cash safely pinned next to her bones, and not giving a cent to charity—or the soup kitchen in the village—or the Red Cross—— Bah, what a miser! She never gives a tip; she has a horror of tips. She'll tell you so herself if you ask her, without moving a muscle."

"She has," laughed Adéle Steinhart, and again she became strangely silent, her throat white as ivory in the moonlight, and again I found myself insisting that she was "wonderful".

"Why?" she asked caressingly, and her hand crept into mine.

For the first time in years I felt that I was young again—and I found my

self smoothing that little hand of hers with a feeling of rest and contentment.

"Wonderful? Oh, for many reasons," I repeated, my heart beating in my ears.

"Tell me," she breathed, slowly opening her eyes.

"Your dearness, for one," I declared, clearing my voice. "And then the very first night I saw you—I shall never forget it!"

It had been shallow ice for some moments between us, and now it broke completely under my tingling impetuosity.

"I'm not fool enough to ask you how you got out of that box," I stumbled on, "for you wouldn't tell me if I did. To me you performed a miracle. You amazed an old observer like myself—to say nothing of Brampton, who evidently has told you he knows a thing or two about such matters."

"Yes," she confessed, "he *has*. I've always hated my profession, Mr. Drake. It seems so mean and belittling. There's enough sham in life without studying it as an art."

"But if the art you despise gives pleasure to others?" I suggested.

"That is, of course, a point of view," she agreed. "After all, if I've given pleasure to those who have been kind to me—if—"

At the sound of a quick, determined step on the veranda, she placed a finger of warning to her lips.

"Draw back a little," she whispered, straightening slowly up in her chair. "And do continue," she added, in a clear, calm voice, "about your friend in Africa. You have no idea, Mr. Drake, how interested I've always been in exploration."

Before I could fashion a reply, vague as the cue was, Brampton, panting for breath, strode up to us, laid his left hand on the back of her chair, keeping his right stuffed in his coat pocket, and

said to her, in a voice that labored for steadiness:

"It's all right. You'll have no trouble whatsoever. Here's the paper. All you've got to do is to sign it."

I distinctly saw her press his hand to her cheek in thankfulness. Then quickly she drew his ear to her lips and whispered a hurried word I could not catch.

"My dear Drake," said Brampton, straightening up with some confusion, "don't try to get to Droux on foot unless you keep hollering ahead of you, '*Vive la France!*' The sentries are everywhere, and they're as quick as—as lightning to challenge you."

His voice had grown faint, and I saw him sway perceptibly, his left hand again seeking the back of her chair, this time for support. Then, from the hand stuffed in his pocket, a drop of blood leaked through and fell spat on the veranda, as black as a drop of ink in the moonlight. She did not see it, for her back was turned to him, but I did from where I still sat at her feet, cross-legged, facing him.

"Brampton!" I cried. "You're wounded!"

She turned with a quick cry, sharp terror in her eyes.

"It—it's nothing," he stammered. "It wasn't the sentry's fault. He's there for that." He braced himself. "It's only a bad scratch— A bend in the road, and I couldn't hear him challenge me for the wind."

"You—you went through that for me?" gasped Adéle Steinhart, as I helped him into the darkened hotel corridor, left him with her, and ran off to the village for a doctor.

A sharp rap at my door awakened me the next morning at a little after ten, for I had been up with Brampton until daylight. He had lost a lot of blood, the ball having missed the big artery in his wrist, but badly slit up

the lesser ones, and it was not until gray dawn that he had fallen into a sound sleep. To my surprise, the man who entered my door was Monsieur Pinard.

"When did you see Miss Steinhart last?" was his first hurried question.

I had never seen Pinard like this. He was no longer the kindly, fat Boniface whom we regarded as benefactor, friend, and proprietor. He came in as brusquely as a gendarme, and pinned me down for a reply with a savage look in his alert blue eyes.

"Why—let me see," I returned, slipping into a bath robe and waving him to a chair. "Hold on! I'll tell you exactly. It was a little after half past one. She came to Doctor Brampton's door to inquire after him. I told her he was comfortable and to go to bed, and she bade me good night and went—up to her room. Why do you ask? What's happened?"

"She's gone!" exclaimed Pinard. "Vanished! Ah, *mon Dieu*, had I known!" He mopped his brow with his pudgy hand.

"Gone! Gone? What do you mean?" I stammered. "Gone? Heavens and earth! Not like her scoundrel of a father, I hope?"

"Worse," retorted Pinard. "There's been a robbery, Mr. Drake—a series of robberies, we fear." I gaped at him in astonishment. "Mrs. Stuyvesant Hooker has been robbed, for one—nearly all her cash, she tells me, and nearly three hundred thousand francs' worth of negotiable securities and jewels."

"Robbed? How robbed?"

"Ah, these women!" he moaned. "None of them had anything, of course. It was I who helped them. It is not in my heart, Mr. Drake, to refuse a woman in distress. They can never say of Emile Pinard that he did not open his heart and his purse in these times." He beat his fat chest. "They had more

money than I—these ladies! I, who befriended the Steinhart woman—ha! ha! —*la petite Steinhart!* I a Frenchman! I am an old fool, monsieur!"

"You don't mean to tell me you suspect Miss Steinhart?" I gasped.

"I'm convinced of it. There's not the shadow of a doubt that she is the thief. A woman who could get out of that box could get into anything."

For a moment I looked at our good proprietor, overwhelmed by the facts he had disclosed to me, stunned over this terrible news—the plainly undeniable guilt of a woman with whom, like Brampton, I had practically fallen in love.

"Mrs. Stuyvesant Hooker is not the only lady who has suffered," resumed Pinard. "There are three other ladies whose names I am not at liberty to tell you, since I have given my word to them not to. But the sums are important."

Another rap at my door silenced us. "Entrez!" I cried.

"Monsieur Brampton calls for monsieur," a bell boy announced.

"Tell Monsieur Brampton I come at once," I told him, and I did.

When I reached his bedside, he handed me a crumpled note.

"Read that," he said faintly, and turned over wearily to the wall.

What I perused was the following, word for word, and no more:

One flat electric pocket lamp. One small hand-forged steel angle iron, pinholed and hinged to fold. Four case-hardened steel pins for same, hatpin diameter which leaves no trace in pine. One small case-hardened jackscrew to fit on angle iron close up to box lid. Lifting power one ton. Thanking you for the passport.

"The secret of the box trick!" I gasped.

"Yes," he groaned, "and a clever one!" His face was ashen.

"Brampton, old man," said I, "I might as well tell you there's been a

robbery—I'm afraid a series of robberies—and—”

“Stop!” he pleaded, turning a pair of wet and haggard eyes to mine. “I know. They've told me. I— You may as well know it all. There was this, too.”

Weakly he held out another bit of paper. Stuck through the upper corner was the missing pin of carved green jade. Below was a hasty scrawl:

No matter where you got this—no matter who first gave it to you—remember always that 'twas I who gave it to you last. A.



THE FAUN SPEAKS

GIVE me the beauty I can see and know—
Color and strong, suave line, fire and snow,
Raw blue of April, green surf's lift and surge,
The swallow's flight, the cardinal's burning flare,
And, softly poised, like fallen flakes of sky,
Gray smoke above gray rivers. All the urge,
Savor, and scent of life are teeming there
In what my eyes can take! Not mine to pry
Into the sea bird's soul, or yours—nor care
For souls, when bodies are so wildly fair.

*Your body is the glass from which I drink
Life's headiest wine. And they would have me shrink
And glance aside, and give you furtive lips
In darkened corners, taste your loveliness
With shamed abandon, sly, uneasy sips,
Mouthing repentant prayers for each caress!
Are eyes shut in rose gardens? Ancient men
Had not this sick and queasy fear of flesh.
(Flesh that is flame-warmed flowers—that is you!)
Even those who writhed within the Achæan mesh,
When Helen came and looked upon them, knew
Walled Troy well lost for golden Helen! Again,
Chill judges heard the unjust, immortal cry—
And Phryne lived, that beauty might not die.*

I must be drunk with life, must drain the glass
Of you, till ichor flows in every vein.
Dear love of mine, I think that I shall pass
From yours to earth's breast, from your lips' bright stain
To crimson flowers. But yet, before I go,
Nothing there is of you I will not know!

MARGUERITE MOOERS MARSHALL.



STORIES OF THE SUPER-WOMEN

BY
ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

What makes the super-woman? Is it beauty? Cleopatra and Rachel were homely. Is it daintiness? Marguerite de Valois washed her hands but twice a week. Is it wit? Pompadour and Du Barry were avowedly stupid in conversation. Is it youth? Diane de Poictiers and Ninon de l'Enclos were wildly adored at sixty. Is it the subtle quality of feminism? George Sand, who numbered her admirers by the score—poor Chopin in their foremost rank—was not only ugly, but disgustingly mannish. So was Semiramis. Here are the stories of super-women who conquered at will. Some of them smashed thrones; some were content with wholesale heart-smashing. Wherein lay their secret? Or rather, their secrets? For seldom did any two of them follow the same plan of campaign.

JEANNE DE LAMOTTE: THE "QUEEN'S NECKLACE" HEROINE

THACKERAY is supposed to have drawn her as foremost of the several real-life people whom he poured into the molding of Becky Sharp. She was the descendant of a king, and she was one of the most industrious primary causes that led another king to lose his head and his crown.

You will like her story. It has all sorts of dime-novel fringes—stolen jewels, conspiracy, mystery, peril, love interest.

She began life as Jeanne de Saint-Remy. Her father was a baron who lived in a hut and had no shoes. Her mother—well, her mother was like the mothers of most of our super-women. Her remote ancestor was Henry II., King of France, of the illustriously infamous Valois line. Henry had honored with his affection one Nicole de Savigny, and he had ennobled their

left-handed son by granting him the glittering name and title of "Henry de Saint-Remy, Baron de Valois." He had also given him vast estates in Champagne, near Bar-sur-Aube. Then had followed two centuries of De Remys who had clung frantically to their title as Barons de Valois, but had squandered every penny they could raise on their baronial estates.

The last of the original Barons de Valois was Jacques de Saint-Remy, who was brought up as a peasant in a roofless corner of the ruined ancestral château, and later was forced out and went to live in a pigsty hovel. There he supported himself by poaching and by other petty thefts; and there he reared his brood of ragged and savage brats. Three of these children outlived the squalor and starvation of their babyhood. They were Jeanne and Marianne, and one son, Jacques.

Old Saint-Remy still clung to his yellowed parchments and patents of nobility. And when he was drunk enough, he used to hiccup loudly about his royal blood.

At last his wife hit on the brilliant plan of asking the king to restore to them their lost estates. The idea was so sublimely idiotic that it delighted her husband. And he and she proceeded at once to put it into effect. A panhandler, suggesting that Rockefeller give him a percentage of the rise in the price of gasoline, would stand quite as good a chance of success as did this worthy couple. But the idea had fired their alleged brains. So off they started to Paris.

The distance was one hundred and fifty miles. They went on foot. Four-year-old Jeanne could toddle most of the way; so could her brother Jacques. But Marianne, the baby, was too little to walk. The weight of their grand enterprise was all her fond parents could comfortably carry, without having to tote a baby along; so they thoughtfully left her on the window sill of a farmer named Durand, who, by odd coincidence, was Saint-Remy's chief creditor. You see, there was still something royal about the fellow, even in his poverty.

Just outside of Paris, the footsore quartet fell in with a poor curé who helped them along and who spent upon them a lot of alms money that could have aided worthier souls.

Perhaps you will be amazed to learn that nothing came of the petition to restore to Saint-Remy the estates of his left-handed ancestor. The family starved in Paris, as the rustic father lacked the wit and the nimbleness to compete with the deft metropolitan thieves. The mother did what she could, in her own way, to support the household, but peasant women of uncertain age found little more employment at Paris.

Jeanne and Jacques were the family's chief support. They begged in the streets, from dawn until dark, and they met with success; not because of little Jeanne's flashing beauty, but because they used to walk along, hand in hand, chanting this weird singsong:

"Take pity on two baby orphans, descended in direct line from Henry II., King of France!"

Presently the noble Baron de Valois fell ill and was carted off to the Hotel de Dieu—the charity hospital founded by Madame de Pompadour. There "a taste for drink, combined with gout," wrought its sweet will of him, so that he died.

A month or so afterward, a posthumous daughter, Marguerite, was born. The mother quickly and frankly went to the street. Between her earnings and those of her beggar babies, the one-room household stuck together for a few years longer. Then the "baroness" fell in love with a foot soldier, Raymond by name, and eloped with him, leaving her children to shift for themselves.

I have tried, throughout this series, to find some one salient trait that all our super-women possessed in common, and I have failed. But this I have discovered—practically every one of them had a mother who was a filthy splash on the supposedly sacred name of motherhood.

Look back over the list for yourself, if you have the patience. Was there one whose mother sought to guide her aright; whose mother mourned the daughter's fall; whose mother—if she lived long enough—did not profit by such a fall? Betty Jumel—daughter of unmarried parents; Mesdames Pompadour, Du Barry, Récamier, Lola Montez, Adah Menken, Lucrezia Borgia, Poppaea, Rachel, Nell Gwyn, Perdita Robinson—just to take a handful of names at random—every one was cursed with a father of doubtful char-

acter and with a mother of whose character there unluckily could be no doubt.

I don't say, mind you, that there has never been a super-woman with a clean mother—merely that I, personally, never heard of one. Their damnable mothers seem to be my super-women's one common asset; which perhaps teaches as sound a lesson as any "Sermon to Parents" that ever was preached.

In plays and in stories, the sweet-faced, white-haired little mother is forever seeking to save her erring daughter. In the history of the super-women, the mothers not only made no such attempts, but usually fattened on their daughters' shame. The sweet-faced, sweet-souled mothers outnumber the others by a thousand to one; only—their daughters don't seem to grow into super-women. For which these same sweet-faced mothers merit the thanks of the ages.

With this pious reflection, let us consider our duty done and hurry back to the waiting Jeanne de Saint-Remy.

Eight-year-old Jeanne, carrying four-year-old Marguerite on her back, one day halted a gorgeous coach and four, on the road from Paris to Passy, and whined impudently in at the window:

"Take pity on two baby orphans, descended in direct line from Henry II., King of France!"

A woman—the Marquise de Boulainvilliers—put her head out of the coach window and looked down into the pretty upraised face in the road below. She was vastly attracted by Jeanne's beauty, and, though her cranky husband, the marquis, angrily told her that the child was an impostor, she took down Jeanne's name and address.

Next day, she called at the tenement where the children lodged. She heard Jeanne's story; she read the yellow parchments; she became more and more interested; and she took all three youngsters home with her.

Marguerite died of smallpox. The Marquise de Boulainvilliers sent Jeanne and Jacques to the rather famous Leclerc School. She did more; she sent for Marianne—the baby who had been left on the Durands' window sill—and undertook to support and educate her, along with the others.

The marquis did not share his wife's enthusiasm over these scions of the House of Valois. In fact, when Jeanne was fourteen, he suggested that she would do well to cease enacting her thrilling rôle of human sponge and try her hand at earning a living.

So Madame de Boulainvilliers obediently took the girl out of school and arranged to apprentice her to a dressmaker. When the news of this change was broken to Jeanne, she flew into a rage that was worthy of royalty and the daughter of royalty.

"You would make me a dressmaker? A tradesperson?" she railed. "Why, I am descended from the kings of France! In my veins courses the azure blood of the Valois monarchs—of Henry II.—of Francis I., of—"

Madame the Marquise surrendered. She employed the girl as "companion" in her own home.

"I was ruled by an indomitable pride which I inherited," says Jeanne, in her "Memoirs," commenting on this dress-making episode. "The kindness of Madame de Boulainvilliers in giving me a glimpse of a more brilliant future had made this pride so acute that I could not but shudder at the thought of going into trade!"

During the next three years, Jeanne had a good chance to take on the veneer of social usages. Her position in the Boulainvilliers' house taught her how people of breeding should behave; and during this time the dream of recovering her family rank and fortune grew to be a monomania. She gave her benefactress no peace until a court

genealogist was hired to look up her ancestry.

The proof was genuine and it was readily established. Through the marquise's influence, the matter was brought before the king. Louis XVI. was always generous with his loving subjects' money; so he granted each of the three children a pension of one hundred and fifty dollars a year, gave Jacques a commission in the navy and the courtesy rank of Baron de Valois, and bestowed upon Jeanne the title of "Mademoiselle de Valois."

Jeanne owed everything to the marquise, and in a spasm of gratitude, she repaid the dear old lady's kindness by starting a violent love affair with her former persecutor, the cranky marquis.

The king learned of this amour—though apparently the marquise herself had no suspicion of it—and he ordered Jeanne to leave the Boulainvilliers' house and go to the convent at Yères.

The girl once more appealed to Madame de Boulainvilliers for help, and managed, through the marquise's influence, to be housed at a place where she would not have so much bothersome guardianship as at a convent.

And so, for a space, her affair with the old marquis flourished unhindered. But other men had met the lovely girl by this time, and her wondrous charm turned the heads of scores of them. Out of the throng she chose Reteaux de Villette, a worthless man about town, on whom she lavished every penny she could wheedle out of the marquis.

These demands for cash became so pressing that the old gentleman cast about in his mind for a way to increase his income. He hit upon the idea of starting a moonshine plant—or illicit distillery—in his cellar, but the government quickly found out his silly enterprise. He was too big a man to be thrown into jail for so petty a crime

as moonshining, so he and his wife were merely banished from Paris.

Jeanne, her source of supplies gone, had to live by her wits. She hit on the daring scheme of going back to her ancestral home at Bar-sur-Aube. There she announced that she had come to claim her family estates.

She found refuge in the home of a Madame de Suremont, wife of a local official; and she repeated her formerfeat of gratitude by stealing the heart of madame's husband.

While using Suremont as a means of support, she turned her real affections on François Bougnot, a writer. Here is what Bougnot says of her in his "Recollections," published after his old-time sweetheart had won world fame:

"The demoiselle, who was to remain only one night with Madame de Suremont, stayed in her home one year, the genius of Mademoiselle de Valois developing even in so narrow a circle. She played preludes before attacking the principal piece. She had taken complete possession of De Suremont, and covered with the blind attachment felt for her by this worthy man the spiteful things she distributed among all who came in contact with her.

"She was not exactly handsome, but she was well formed. Her blue eyes were full of expression and arched with black eyebrows. Her face was rather too long and her mouth too wide, but the latter was adorned with white teeth, and her smile was enchanting. Her hands were pretty, her feet were small, and her complexion was of dazzling whiteness. She had a naturally quick and penetrating mind, and she wholly lacked moral sense."

Which leads one to wonder just how hard Jeanne jilted Bougnot. For jilt him she did; in favor of Suremont's weak-kneed nephew, Nicholas de Lamotte—a French Rawdon Crawley—who was a subaltern in the army.

De Lamotte proposed to her, being utterly swept off his feet by her charm. He was not much of a catch, but he had a "de" in front of his name and he meant Marriage—with a capital "M". Also, Jeanne's reputation was beginning to grow thin in spots; and, as you shall see, there were other and more pressing reasons for accepting her first offer that was a proposal and not a mere proposition.

She married the sighing De Lamotte. Next month her twin sons were born—and died.

As the Baroness de Lamotte de Valois, Jeanne now began to cut a figure in county society. The squires and the officers of the near-by garrison were her adoring slaves. The Marquis d'Aurichamp, colonel of her husband's regiment, was her most ardent worshiper. Her home was the center of all local gayeties. She ruled a rural court of her own—apparently on nothing a year. For she and her complacent husband, between them, had not enough income to keep them for a month at the rate they were squandering money.

Short in cash and in need of enough to stave off creditors, she bethought her of her old friend, the Marquise de Boulainvilliers. The marquise was just then a guest of Cardinal Archbishop Prince Louis de Rohan, Grand Almoner of France, at the archiepiscopal palace of Saverne, not far away. And to the marquise Jeanne went for aid. The marquise presented Jeanne to her host, saying to him:

"The name of Valois really belongs to my dear young friend here, but she has no means of supporting it with dignity."

The cardinal was delighted with Jeanne's beauty and wit. He invited the De Lamottes to visit him, for an indefinite length of time, at his palace. He would have fared better, at the last,

if he had invited a colony of typhoid germs to lodge with him.

All that the De Lamottes could obtain through him that time, however, was the husband's promotion in the army, the doubling of the wife's pension, and the king's consent to let the baroness call herself a countess if she so chose. The cardinal could do nothing more for Jeanne at court, because he chanced to be in dire disgrace there.

Years before, Rohan had spoken his mind right freely as to the conduct of Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria. Maria Theresa's daughter, Marie Antoinette, was just now Queen of France, and she never had forgiven Rohan for his words about her mother. She hated him with the poisonous hatred of a malicious fool, and, except when he celebrated mass at Versailles once a year, in his capacity of grand almoner, she would not see him or communicate with him in any way.

The court, of course, followed the example of its precious queen. Wherefore, Cardinal de Rohan—one of the greatest men by birth and rank in all France—found himself practically an outcast from court circles. This grieved him and hurt his pride. He tried in every way to win his peace with the stubborn queen, but absolutely in vain.

He once told Jeanne that if he could but meet the queen, face to face, and talk with her, he was certain he could explain matters and overcome her prejudice against him. Jeanne treasured the memory of that speech. She saw in it her chance, and she set to work.

Among Rohan's hangers-on was one of the strangest men in all history—Cagliostro, the archcharlatan. Cagliostro claimed to be the original Wandering Jew. He never passed a crucifix without shrinking away from it as if in dire remorse. He said that he clearly remembered every detail of the

Crucifixion; that he had lived on earth ever since; that he kept himself young by the use of a secret elixir—of which he used to sell bottles at their weight in diamonds; that he could summon spirits from the dead; that he could send forth his own spirit to bear messages to and from all parts of the globe. He was a faker, a liar, a mountebank, and yet—he foretold the fall of the Bastille and the dance of the people on its ruins. He announced one day that Maria Theresa had died in Austria at a certain hour that morning, and later it proved that she had died at precisely that hour. This, in an age that knew nothing of telegraphy, was curious at the very least.

Yes, Cagliostro was a faker, of course he was. But—

Well, he fell in love with Jeanne, and he—the supreme swindler—became her dupe. The enslaved charlatan willingly joined in the plot Jeanne was hatching.

Next, she hunted up her old lover, Reteaux de Villette, who added clever forgery to his other gifts. And she made him forge Queen Marie Antoinette's signature to a letter to Rohan. The letter hinted that the queen might some day consent to an interview. Rohan was always credulous—he even believed implicitly in Cagliostro—so the message from the queen filled him with delight. He saw his years of social exile ending in glory.

Jeanne, meantime, hunted through Paris until she found a dance-hall girl, Mademoiselle Leguay, who bore a striking resemblance to Marie Antoinette. She won the girl's friendship and promised to pay her three thousand dollars if Leguay would impersonate the queen in a harmless practical joke to be played some night in the royal park at Versailles.

"It was easy to make Leguay believe all this," writes Jeanne in her "Me-

moirs," "for she was very stupid indeed."

The puzzled girl consented. She came to Jeanne's house for a visit. Jeanne introduced her as "the Baroness d'Oliva." The correspondence between Rohan and the queen was keeping up merrily. Jeanne dictated to Villette the royal letters and intercepted those that Rohan wrote in return. And if Rohan had any doubts, Cagliostro lulled them to sleep with mystic prophecies of success.

Finally the queen's letters gave the cardinal every reason to believe that a brief personal interview could clear away the whole misunderstanding. But, the supposed queen pointed out, the interview must be strictly private—at a time and place that would be secure from interruption.

The time arrived. Jeanne, disguised as a nun, came to Rohan with the news that Marie Antoinette would meet him at a certain hour that very night in a corner of the park at Versailles. He hustled off to Versailles, where d'Oliva—formerly Leguay—and Jeanne awaited his arrival. Here is the story of the meeting, translated from d'Oliva's confession at the trial. There seems every reason to think it is the truth:

"It was a dark night—not a spark of moonlight. Nor could I distinguish anything but those persons and objects which were familiar to me. It would be quite impossible for me to describe the state I was in. I was so agitated, so excited, so disconcerted, and so tremulous, that I cannot conceive how I was able to accomplish even half of what I had been instructed to do.

"My orders were to offer a rose to a 'great nobleman' who was to believe he was receiving it from the hands of the queen, and to say to him: 'You know what this means.'"

The cardinal, swathed in a long cloak and with the wide brim of his

hat pulled over his face, "no sooner found himself in the presence of the counterfeit queen than he fell on his knees and kissed her hand, which at the same time let fall the rose it held."

But before he could utter a word, Jeanne, to avoid the almost certain risk of detection, rushed up and, announcing, "Quick! Quick! We are watched!" drew d'Oliva away.

The cardinal, too, vanished into the darkness and thence to the carriage that was to bear him back to Paris. He was no longer in even the remotest doubt. He was certain that it was the queen who had given him the rose, there in the dim-lit park, and that but for the interruption, she would have let him explain away her former dislike for him.

Next day came a letter from her majesty hinting at another meeting and asking for ten thousand dollars for one of her favorite charities. Rohan eagerly sent the money. A little later came a request for twenty thousand dollars. It was worth far more than that to Rohan to secure a foothold at court, and once more he sent the money.

Jeanne had thus annexed thirty thousand dollars by her playful little scheme. Of the three thousand dollars she had promised d'Oliva, she paid her less than one thousand dollars.

Back to Bar-sur-Aube went the Lamottes. They bought part of Jeanne's ancestral estates, paid the most pressing of their debts, and launched out into a life of dazzling splendor that melted away the thirty thousand dollars' booty in record time.

Dead broke once more, Jeanne did not worry. If Rohan had been good for thirty thousand dollars, he was good for more. And then came to her the scheme that made her immortal and that hastened along the French Revolution and the slaying of Louis XVI. and his queen. Which brings us at

last to the story of the diamond necklace, a story you've often heard told better than I can hope to tell it.

Back in the days when Louis XV. ruled France—and Madame du Barry ruled Louis XV.—the jeweler firm of Bohmer & Bassenge had concocted a necklace of surpassing value and still more surpassing hideousness. It was shaped like one of those flannel chest protectors you sometimes see on horses. It was a mass of diamonds of all sizes. Its price was one million six hundred thousand livres.

Madame du Barry saw the necklace. Child of the gutter that she was, she forgot its ugliness in its amazing value, and she wheedled and coaxed her kingly lover into promising to buy it for her.

Before the sale could be made, Louis XV. kissed a peasant girl who had smallpox, caught the malady from her, and died—to the great relief of the nation. Bohmer & Bassenge tried to sell the necklace to his successor, Louis XVI., but the new king would not look at it. They showed it to Marie Antoinette, who said:

"Take the thing out of my sight! It is a crime against beauty."

"Nobody else wanted it, after that dictum. And so the priceless diamond necklace went unpurchased.

For some reason or other, Bohmer could not rid himself of the idea that the queen would buy it if the right sort of influence were brought to bear on her. And he spent years hunting around for "the right sort of influence".

Jeanne knew all this, and it gave her her great idea. Bohmer, very soon afterward, heard in a roundabout way that the Baroness de Lamotte de Valois had vast secret influence with the queen. He went to Jeanne and offered her a commission of one thousand livres if she could induce her majesty to purchase the necklace. She accepted

the mission, but declined the commission.

"If it be in my power to help you," she told Bohmer graciously, "that alone shall be my reward. That and your pledge that no one shall know I have had anything to do with the matter."

Bohmer rapturously promised. Then Jeanne summoned Villette and bade him warm up the "correspondence" between the queen and Rohan—which he had been continuing in a desultory fashion for his own amusement.

The cardinal still treasured the rose given him in the Versailles park. At his right hand was Cagliostro, who exercised his mystic powers of divination to foretell the exact date when Rohan would receive a formal invitation to court as a member of the ministry.

Along came a letter from his regal correspondent, begging him to do her a great service, which, the letter said, the Baroness de Lamotte was empowered by her majesty to explain to him in full. And off to Jeanne rushed De Rohan.

Jeanne told him that Marie Antoinette was sick with yearning to own the famous diamond necklace, but had not at the moment the funds to pay for it.

"The queen," went on Jeanne, "wishes the purchase to be secret for the present, so as not to offend the king, who might be annoyed at her extravagance. And, being short of money, she can think of no one but you, who—personally and from the high consideration you enjoy—would be guarantee in the eyes of the jewelers. The price of the necklace she proposes to pay in four installments."

The cardinal consulted Cagliostro, who, swayed by his own sublime faith in Jeanne's imaginary influence over the queen, said in effect: "Go to it!"

Rohan gave Bohmer a written guarantee and received the huge necklace, which he at once handed over to Jeanne.

Jeanne gave the necklace to her hus-

band, who slashed it to pieces with his penknife and stuffed the strands of diamonds into his inside pockets.

Then, fairly bulging with gems, he set out for England. At Gray's, in Bond Street, London, he readily disposed of the stones, and brought back the profits to the faithful little wife who so patiently awaited his return at their happy, if humble, Paris home.

And for the next few months there was gayety and splendor in the household of Jeanne de Lamotte. For once in her life, our gentle heroine actually had more money than she could spend.

I wish I might ring down the curtain upon Jeanne at this point, when peace and plenty crowned her years of honest endeavor. But in real life the curtain has an amateurish way of refusing to go down at the right moment. Instead of descending gracefully on a climax or a tableau, it gets stuck at one corner and reveals the fringe-trousered legs of the stage hands, or the unstudied gawkiness of the actors as they fall out of their rehearsed poses.

So let's go on to the anticlimax.

Six months later, the first payment—four hundred thousand livres—on the necklace fell due. Rohan asked Jeanne to jog the queen's memory. Jeanne said her majesty was still hard up and wanted an extension of time.

Rohan repeated this to Bohmer—who also happened to be hard up. The honest jeweler began to suspect things. He chanced to meet Madame Campan, the queen's lady in waiting, and he told her his troubles.

Madame Campan, who was deep in her royal mistress' confidence, assured Bohmer that the queen had never bought the necklace and had had no idea of buying it. Thence Bohmer went to Jeanne.

"You must have been swindled by her majesty," said Jeanne, when she heard the sad tale. "But the cardinal is rich. I am sure he will pay you."

The moment Bohmer left her, Jeanne sent word to Villette and d'Oliva to get out of France in a hurry if they still cared for their liberty. They fled; Villette to Geneva, d'Oliva to Brussels.

Jeanne had done a clever thing in advising Bohmer to see Rohan. The cardinal might readily have paid up in order to avoid scandal. But the duped jeweler did not take her advice. He went straight to the king. Louis XVI. did not quite understand—he seldom quite understood, a failing that materially shortened his life—so he sent for the queen.

And then the fat was in the fire. Nothing would do but the cardinal must at once be haled into the royal presence.

Rohan protested that he had acted in good faith.

"How could you suppose I would ask such a favor of you," screamed the furious queen, "when you know how I hate you?"

She whirled about on the gaping, bewildered king and demanded that Rohan be placed under arrest. Louis, like the old fool he was, dazedly consented. And Cardinal Archbishop Prince de Rohan, Grand Almoner of France, was packed off to the Bastille.

If anything could have injured the king and queen more than this publishing of the necklace swindle, it was the arrest of this innocent dignitary of the church. The people, ground down by taxes, heard of the necklace's purchase, and they cursed their queen for adding to their burdens; the clergy heard with horror of the grand almoner's unjust disgrace; the anarchists who were trying to overthrow both crown and church went mad with joy.

"'Tis a grand and joyful business!" shouted one revolutionary deputy. "A cardinal in a swindle! The queen implicated in forgery! Filth on the crozier and the scepter! What a triumph for Liberty!"

Yes, little Jeanne had surely done her share toward hastening the Revolution.

Bougnot brought the terrible news to Jeanne, at Bar-sur-Aube, and he besought her to flee for her life. But for once the rotten blood of the Valois kings showed blue, not yellow.

"I shall stand my ground," she declared. "If there be danger, I am a Valois and I can face it! I defy them to prove my guilt!"

After which she prudently burned every scrap of paper in her desk. She had barely finished this light task when officers came to arrest her. Her husband slipped through the police net and got away safely to England.

Geneva gave up Villette; Brussels disengaged d'Oliva; Cagliostro was seized.

"In a fortnight," says Carlyle, "the Bastille had opened its iron bosom to receive them all."

Jeanne came to trial. Serenely impudent, she accused the queen, the cardinal—and Cagliostro, too—of forming a plot to rob Bohmer. But the mass of evidence against her shoved the glib lies down her pretty throat and proved her guilt past all doubt.

Her trial lasted nine months and was the most interesting event in all Europe. At its end, she was found guilty and was condemned to the following punishment:

"To be flogged, naked, having a halter around her throat; to be branded on the shoulder; and to be imprisoned for life in the *Salpêtrière*."

Villette and Cagliostro were banished from France; d'Oliva was discharged as an innocent victim of Jeanne's lures; and Rohan—to the raging mortification of the queen—was "acquitted with honor." The courts thus, for the first time in French history, slapped the face of the court.

Lamotte received the same sentence as did Jeanne. But as he was safe in

England, and as England was always more or less at war with France, this did not worry him to any great extent.

Jeanne, fighting, biting, foaming at the mouth in a murderous rage, was dragged to the courtyard of the Conciergerie to be whipped. She yelled to the crowd:

"If they treat thus the blood of the Valois, what fate is in store for the Bourbons?"

A guard clapped his hand over her mouth to silence her. She bit his hand to the bone. She fought so fiercely that the red-hot branding iron slipped from her shoulder and marked her a second time, on the breast, with the fiery letter "V"—for "voleuse"—"thief." She fainted with the pain of this, before the flogging began.

Thence she was taken to the horrible Salpêtrière prison—the worst of its unspeakable kind. Within a year, powerful secret influence enabled her to escape, and she made her way to London to her husband.

There, she wrought out a scheme of revenge, by writing her "Memoirs," in which she grossly slandered Marie Antoinette.

An emissary was sent from the French court to bribe Jeanne to destroy these "Memoirs," unpublished. Jeanne accepted the bribe—and published the "Memoirs."

The book had a tremendous sale and added its quota to the world's growing hatred of Marie Antoinette. As soon as the Bastille's fall made it safe for Lamotte to go to France, he carried a large edition of the "Memoirs" to Paris. Louis XVI. bought up and burned the whole edition.

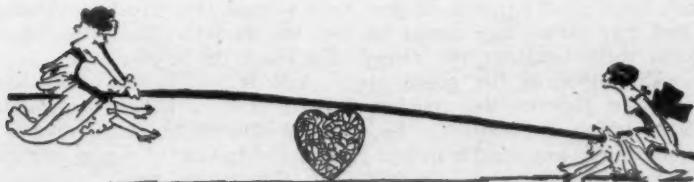
Jeanne was making ready a second book of the same sort, and Lamotte was persuading the king to pay for its destruction, when the promising venture was cut short by the downfall of the French monarchy and the arrest of the king and the queen.

Even as Jeanne had cheated every one, so her publishers cheated her. She got scarce any royalties from the huge sale of her book. She was in stark poverty. One day in August, 1791, bailiffs came to carry her to the debtor's prison. With memories of the Salpêtrière's horrors, Jeanne wrenched herself loose from her captors, ran to the roof of a house, and jumped off.

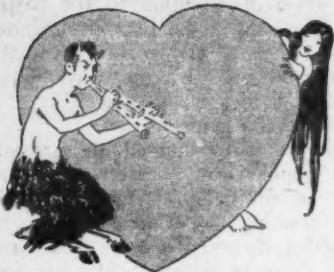
She lived on, shattered and maimed, for several weeks, before the suffering body could shake loose the flaming spirit that refused to quit its smashed abode.

A pretty story, is it not?

The July number of AINSLEE'S will contain the next article in Mr. Terhune's Super-Women series: "Mesalina: Super-Sinner."



Eggs, like nice people's morals, are not always what they're cracked up to be.



DON'T DO IT!

By Du Vernet Rabell

ONCE in a while you can do something for a man for his own good and get away with it. If the means to the end are unpleasant, he may get mad; but ultimately he'll see the point of the affair, and ten to one he'll laugh. But with a woman—don't do it.

I had known Billy Bachelder off and on during my whole life. To be sure, I lived in San Francisco—when dad and I weren't wandering like nomads all over the face of the globe—and Billy lived in New York; but Billy seemed to have business interests mixed up with dad's, and every so often he would turn up and meet us, sometimes halfway in Denver, two or three times in Paris, and once in a little town in the interior of South America where dad was interested in some mines. Billy was interested, too; and as I had just been going through a rather awful time trying to forget a man dad was determined I should not remember, Billy, with his bubbling, don't-worry view of life, was a great help to me.

The man—his name was Larry Kirby—was a lawyer in San Francisco. Dad had had trouble with him about a title to some mines. Dad had seemed to be determined to do something that Larry Kirby had been equally determined he should not do; and as Larry had had right and law and money on his side, dad's case had been as good as lost from the start. He was dread-

fully bitter against Larry; and he told me that I must wipe him out of my life as completely as if he had never been. It's so easy for a man to talk like that. Although I will say for dad, he knew he was setting me no easy task. He tried to console me by saying that I was beautiful and clever and that he could do much better for me, matrimonially speaking, than letting me marry a pig-headed dabbler in a highwayman's profession. He added that some day I might be rich, and of course that would help.

We weren't then—not by any manner of means. But one of dad's golden dreams must have come true, because when he died, two years later, in Hong-kong, he left me a surprising amount of money. I found that Billy Bachelder had entire charge of my estate, and he had dug up Aunt Luella, a distant relative whom I had never met in my life, to chaperon me and to look out for the conventions generally.

After a weeping five months, Billy urged New York upon me, saying that what I needed was change; and I had been in New York only four days when the thing happened.

It all began innocently enough. Billy and I were sitting in a wonderful place called the "Swinging Gardens," drinking tea between dances and talking New York. Aunt Luella had gone back to our hotel with a headache, and I maintain to this day that Billy took

advantage of my unprotected state to spring the thing upon me. Aunt Luella is strong for all the conventions of life, and she knows to a nicety what can and what cannot be done, and I'm quite sure that she would not have listened to Billy for a minute.

Now there are three things the matter with Billy Bachelder—he is erratically impulsive, he has no regard for truth, and his memory is the length of a tack. Any of the three alone would be bad enough, but you can see for yourself that the combination is a menace to the public safety.

Billy, with startling originality, had just asked me what I thought of New York.

"I'm mad about it!" I told him. "I've heard of New Yorkitis; but, hailing from a town that is of the firm opinion that the good Lord used it as a model for the rest of the world, I didn't use to believe in it. But, Billy, I was inoculated from my first deep breath."

"It's a great town," he agreed. "I wish, though, the mater hadn't been delayed in Lenox. I have an uneasy feeling that, during the few days I have charge of you, I'll be sure to do something wrong—introduce you to the right people in the wrong place, or something like that—and then I'll get mine from the mater."

He smoked for a moment in silence and then asked smilingly:

"Tell me, Mona, from what you've seen so far, what do you think of us all?"

"I think you're charming." I hesitated, then I laughed. "But do tell me, Billy, where do you keep the girls in this town? At the theaters, at Mrs. Wilmedering's last night, and this afternoon, for instance, we've seen so few girls. Positively, as far as I can see, the young married woman seems to have the field all to herself."

"That's the New York idea," Billy airily informed me, as he turned to

give reverent attention to the pastry tray the waiter held at his elbow. "Now, there's my cousin, Nathalie Henderson—— By the way, did I ever speak to you about her?"

"Not that I remember."

Billy carefully divided his tart into three geometrically perfect angles before he continued. Then he asked, with seeming irrelevance:

"Mona, do you still have those same rabid, quixotic ideas about your own sex?"

"Quite the same—even more so. You see, it's this way, Billy. I've seen more than most girls of my age, and I've learned a lot. If it's ever a question of a man or a woman, and the thing is put up to me, I'm for the woman, blind, every time."

"Humph!" Billy scoffed. "That's one of those little theories that sound fine, but don't prove easy."

"Oh, Billy, we've gone over that so many times! Get back to your cousin. Were you going to tell me something about her?"

Billy leaned back, his round face, which always reminds me of a pensive full moon, wrinkled thoughtfully.

"Seems funny I never mentioned Nathalie to you. She married my roommate in college, three years ago. He's a fine chap, and they've got two of the dandiest kids in all Manhattan. The boy is named after me. Nathalie is a sweet, simple, domestic type of girl, devoted to her husband and her babies." He paused and sighed prodigiously. "It's a great pity! From where I sit, she seems in imminent danger of losing both."

I was about to inquire into the details when a man passed close to our table. He didn't look at me—he didn't have to; I would have known the back of his head, the set of his shoulders, and the way he carried himself, in Timbuktu. It was Larry Kirby, and my heart gave a leap that threatened

to choke me, and a queer thrill ran caressing fingers down my spine.

What was he doing here in New York? Was there the slightest chance in the world that he might turn around and see me?

"Come out of it!" Billy commanded.
"Did you see a ghost?"

"Yes," I returned. "The ghost of a dead dream."

Billy twisted around, all interest, but Larry was hidden by a pillar; and just as Billy twisted back and settled himself to a cross-examination, there was the softest laugh right at my elbow. It was a wonderful laugh. It gurgled up and down the scale and finally finished with a trill of pure happiness.

"Billy Bachelder!" the voice that owned the laugh exclaimed. "The gentleman who feigns to despise pink teas, dancing, and the abodes of the frivolous! Kenneth, isn't this a joke?"

Another voice, with a perfect English accent that it must have taken years of patience to acquire, agreed without enthusiasm that it was a joke; and then two people came around the side of the table where I could see them.

One was a girl in a white beaver-trimmed suit. She was small and blond, with round blue eyes like Billy's and a pretty little tip-tilted mouth and small, white, even teeth. The most noticeable thing about the man was his clothes. They were the kind you see in the theater programs under the heading: "What the Men will Wear." And tucked in his cuff was a handkerchief of a hypnotic shade of lavender.

Billy presented the girl as Mrs. Henderson, and added: "My Cousin Nathalie, of whom I spoke, you know." He smiled knowingly like a wise, fat cherub, giving me the uncomfortable impression that I had missed some sort of a high sign.

Mrs. Henderson smiled at me and waved her hand toward her companion.

"Mr. Witherspoon," she said. Then she pouted at Billy. "I didn't quite understand your name. Billy always chews up his introductions."

I bowed to Mr. Witherspoon, and was about to murmur my name when the music started and Billy was on his feet, apparently so eager to dance that he pranced with impatience.

"That was a close shave!" he exclaimed, as he guided me out on the dancing floor. "I chewed up your name on purpose. I don't want Nathalie to know who you are. If she asks you your name again, evade her somehow."

"Why?" I demanded indignantly.

We had just passed the table where Larry was sitting with two men, and I had to drag my thoughts away from him with a jerk. Billy didn't enlighten me, however. He muttered something indefinite about telling me later, and then gave all of his attention to his feet. He needed to.

When we got back to the table, fresh tea things had arrived, and the most prominent things on the tray were two cocktails.

"I'm dead to the world!" Mrs. Henderson was explaining. "I haven't been home until all hours, for a month. Last night Cora Hastings gave a Chinatown party, and it didn't break up until daylight. You ought to have gone, Billy. It was shocking, really."

Then the little lady went on to give a lurid description of what must have been a pretty lurid party. She shrugged her shoulders, giggled, and, from time to time, raised horrified eyes to the ceiling. She made a mighty amusing tale out of it, sailing pretty close to the wind once or twice, but trimming her sails just in time. As I watched Mrs. Nathalie Henderson, as I listened to her story and the way she told it, I freely and candidly admitted that she was a fascinating bit of femininity. But simple? Sweet and home-loving? Well, hardly!

Billy looked at me as she finished, winked gravely once, and then rippled into an expansive grin.

"Ah—have you been in New York long?" Mr. Witherspoon broke the silence here to ask me. "How do you like it?"

It was about what I would have expected from him, and little Mrs. Henderson was plainly amused.

"Oh, for goodness sake, Kenneth!" she remonstrated. "Every one has probably asked her that. Think of something new." She flashed a laughing glance at me and busied herself with the teapot and a small bottle.

"What have you there?" Billy inquired with interest.

"Rum. Do try some. I always have a cocktail first because it tunes me up, and then I put rum in my tea to keep me keyed. Come on, Kenneth. There's that new fox trot."

Witherspoon rose with alacrity.

"Now dance it slowly, Nathalie," he said, as he placed his arm about her with a sort of possessive care. "One, two, three quick steps— You have it! You can certainly dance, dear lady!"

"Your sweet, home-loving cousin?" I inquired with pointed emphasis, as my eyes followed them about the room.

She could dance. She moved with the grace of a dryad, her short skirts flaring out over her high little fur-trimmed boots. As she passed the table where Larry Kirby was sitting, she smiled and nodded, and when he nodded back, my attention became fixed on him instead of on the dancers. Then I don't know whether it was because I was looking at him so hard or thinking of him so hard, anyway he turned around. His eyes met mine, narrowed with surprise, and he rose abruptly and crossed the room. He was at our table almost before I had made up my mind in the least what I

was going to say. I could only drink him in with my eyes.

He looked older, a little, and his mouth seemed sterner, but there was the same half-humorous, cynical twist at one corner, and his eyes were the same, too—gray-green eyes with a line of black around the iris.

"Mona!" he said, in his old attractive drawl. "I couldn't believe it was you!"

I said something appropriately trite and stupid, and tried to free myself from the spell of his eyes, as I presented Billy.

But, it appeared, no introduction was necessary. Billy hailed him as an old friend, and took the entire burden of the conversation upon himself, while he marveled at the strange circumstance of Larry's knowing me.

"At the risk of seeming banal, I will observe that the world is small," he chuckled. "All you have to do is to stay right here in New York, and sooner or later you'll meet everybody on earth worth knowing."

Larry half smiled and then leaned over determinedly and addressed the ebullient Billy.

"Quite true," he said. "And now, Billy, might I suggest that you go and find yourself a nice girl who likes your dancing and your brand of humor? Mona and I are going to talk over old times, and you know how stupid that is for the chap who wasn't there."

"I do—and nothing doing! Mona is staying at the Altmore. You have my permission to lunch with her to-morrow and resurrect the ghosts."

He looked at me with an impudent grin. I suppose I must have blushed or looked silly or something, because he chuckled maliciously and, when Nathalie Henderson breezed back to the table, he said:

"What do you know about this? Larry Kirby drifted over here a moment since, folded Mona's hand in his,

announced himself as a long-lost lover— Oh, all right, then—not a long-lost lover, a long-lost friend. Are we going to permit them to reminisce unchecked, and spoil our afternoon?"

"Dear me, no!" Mrs. Henderson smiled. "Kenneth, ask Miss—" She wrinkled her brow, and then hurried on, "Ask her to dance this minute."

Mr. Witherspoon obeyed at once.

I flattered myself that I can dance, but I never did go in for trick dancing, not even when everybody else did.

"You move wonderfully," Kenneth Witherspoon complimented me, before we had taken ten steps. "Do you know the half-moon glide?"

"Do they still do that in New York?" I inquired with bored carelessness, as he deftly swung me in between an earnestly working fat lady and Nathalie and Larry.

My answer seemed to stun him for the time being, and he made no further references to the half-moon glide.

"You like dancing, of course?" he ventured presently.

"I hate it," I returned promptly.

I would have hated anything he did, on general principles. Larry Kirby could dance, but he didn't positively breathe dancing.

Kenneth Witherspoon forgot his pose of bored nonchalance for a minute to stare down at me.

"Hate dancing?" he repeated dazedly. "Hate dancing! But you mustn't! My word, you mustn't, really! What else is there to do? And when a girl dances as you do, when she coordinates—"

"What's that?" I asked suspiciously; but he merely smiled, and, as the music sighed itself to silence, he led me to our table.

On the way, an impressive bejeweled person, upholstered in red velvet, caught his sleeve and begged him to teach her the new drop the next time they played a waltz, and he had only

time to deposit me at the table when he was off again.

Billy and Nathalie were busily engaged checking off names on the back of the menu. Billy was insisting on three extra men, at the very least, for some occasion, maintaining that, as all the women wanted to dance all of the time, he, for one, held the opinion that the men ought to be allowed to dance in relays; and Nathalie was arguing that they were short two girls as it was. She gazed reflectively at me, flashed a glance at Billy, who bobbed his head at once, and then said with a smile:

"Oh, won't you come to Lakewood for the week-end? Laura Kent—she's a dear; everybody loves her—would be so glad to have you. Please don't say you're already engaged." She laid persuasive fingers on my arm and opened her violet eyes appealingly.

"I haven't an engagement," I began. "But you see—"

"Now, isn't that lucky? Come on, Larry, we'll call up Laura right away."

As they departed, dancing across the floor, I faced Billy in dismay.

"Why, Billy, I can't possibly do this! I don't know Mrs. Kent. I don't even know Mrs. Henderson. I couldn't think—"

"That's it exactly. Don't think. None of us do. We haven't time. Just as we haven't time to be properly presented, called upon, and looked over, before we're rushed into the fold. Who cares? This is the life! So don't you worry that stunning head of yours about the proprieties of the thing, because we've forgotten there ever was such a thing. Well, perhaps not that bad," he modified soothingly. "What I mean is that Laura Kent is a dear soul, a friend of my mater's, and she'll be delighted to do anything for you she can."

I was still undecided when Billy abruptly switched the conversation.

"Apropos of your remark a little while ago concerning the young married woman having the field to herself, what do you think of this affair of Nathalie's?"

"I don't know what you mean, and anyhow why should I think of any affair of your cousin's?"

"Because you—— Now listen here, Mona." Billy leaned across the table and began to talk earnestly. "Nobody understands Nathalie's infatuation for Kenneth Witherspoon at all. He's a dancing man, and the craze for his kind is dying out, thank the Lord! Jim Henderson is crazy. He's as jealous as a fiend anyhow, and things are just about ready for a show-down, and then smash! There goes another one! Honestly, it's a case of here to-day and gone to-morrow with the marriage game in this generation." He gloomily bit a piece out of a caviar sandwich and looked at me. "Mona, we've got to do something."

My hand remained suspended over the muffins, while I stared at him in amazement.

"We've got to?" I repeated. "We've got to? It seems to me that's up to her husband."

"What could he do?"

"For one thing, he could have taken this dancing man, this Kenneth Witherspoon, by the neck and tossed him far from there, the first time he found him basking on his hearthrug. Then he could have spanked his wife and shut her up in the closet."

Billy appeared to reflect.

"I believe you're right," he admitted at last. "If he had followed those tactics, he'd have finished the thing before it got started, and the way it looks now, Nathalie isn't going to finish it at all—until it's too late. She hasn't a bit of sense!"

"Why should she have?" I inquired idly. "Her kind doesn't need brains. The Lord thoughtfully provides a big,

strong, quiet-eyed husband to look out for her kind."

"Well, Jim is big and strong all right, but here's nothing quiet about him. He loves Nathalie, but he'll stand just so much, and methinks he's nearing his limit. Come on, Mona, be a sport! Prove that 'I'm-for-the-woman-blind' theory of yours. You'll be saving Nathalie Henderson from herself. I dare you."

"Don't be silly, Billy Bachelder!"

"I'm not. The thought sprang into my mind the minute you said you still held those old views of yours. That's why I didn't want her to know your name."

"I don't see the connection at all."

"Part of my plan. I want you to cut Nathalie out with Kenneth Witherspoon."

I laughed. It was too absurd.

"It can't be done. You ought to know that a girl has no chance——"

"That's just where Billy's little thinker comes in. We're going to pretend that you're married. You can be a widow—any variety; take your choice—and everybody knows that a widow combines all the charms of the débâtaute and the married flirt and possesses a few of her own thrown in. That mourning is sure becoming to you; you'd better have your husband dead." He paused and studied me reflectively. Then, as an afterthought, "Of course you're going to be game, aren't you, Mona?"

I wasn't, and I was about to say so, decidedly and beyond all possibility of misunderstanding, when Nathalie reappeared and sank into her chair with a little sigh of relief.

"It was so dear of Billy to think of you for the week-end." She smiled at me. "In these dancing days, a house party is a dreadful thing to get up."

"Are you still as fond of dancing as you used to be?" Larry asked me.

"I would rather do it than anything else in the world."

Kenneth Witherspoon stared at me in amazement, but, before he could say anything, Billy Bachelder exploded the bomb.

"Mrs. Warrington is some dancer, take it from Billy!"

And it was plainly the name—Mrs. Warrington—that caused the explosion.

Everybody looked kind of blank, and Larry Kirby shot a chain-lightning glance at me that made me long instantly to throttle Billy. How dared he take it serenely for granted that I had agreed to this mad plan of his? And unless I wanted to put myself into a hopelessly silly position—because you are always more or less silly when you try to explain a thing that depends upon results to be explainable—unless I wanted to give Billy Bachelder a chance to laugh at some very real feelings of mine for the balance of my life, I was trapped, fairly and inextricably. Oh, it was maddening! And the look in Larry Kirby's eyes was the most maddening thing of all. Then I was caught in the drift of the conversation.

"Warrington? Did you say the name was Warrington?" Mrs. Henderson asked. "That is odd! One of my closest friends married a Warrington of Denver."

"That's the family," babbled Billy.

Mrs. Henderson raised her chin and looked me over slowly and very carefully. Then she inquired in a tone of ice:

"Not by any chance Mrs. Curtis Warrington? Not the widow of Curtis Giles Warrington?"

I had taken instant alarm at Mrs. Henderson's tone, but Billy, it appeared, was quite tone deaf, because he bobbed his head like a mandarin gone mad and replied joyously:

"That's the one. Did you know him?"

"No, I didn't," Nathalie Henderson snapped, and then went on, after a chilly pause: "But I knew the *family* very well, and"—she turned and swept me with a scathing glance—"and I know the *whole* story. I must ask to be excused now. I have an early dinner engagement."

Billy was gazing at her with a troubled pucker wrinkling his brow, but I didn't spare Billy much more than a cursory glance. I was too engrossed in another direction.

The muscles along Larry's square jaw were set tight, and I felt myself shivering under his look.

Mrs. Nathalie Henderson, with the barest backward nod in my direction, was flying down the room. At the door she paused, and in a minute Kenneth Witherspoon came back to tell Billy that his cousin wanted to see him. As Billy rose and ambled off, Kenneth Witherspoon leaned over me.

"I have enjoyed meeting you so much, Mrs. Warrington," he murmured, flecking a suspicion of ash from his handkerchief. "You must let me call. Perhaps there is something I can do to make your stay among us pleasant."

I suppose I answered something. I must have, because he pressed my hand gratefully as he departed.

That left Larry and me at the table alone. At that moment I wished for nothing so much as the ability to vanish into thin air, away from the narrowing, accusing, contemptuous gaze of Larry Kirby's gray-green eyes.

"So it was a case of the highest bidder?" he sneered, after a torturing minute. "I wouldn't believe it when your father outlined his plans for you. I couldn't believe that a girl, a girl like you— Oh, but you're all alike!"

Now, wasn't that just like a man? Notice that he didn't ask me to explain

a thing. In fact, he didn't give me a chance to explain a thing; just went savagely ahead and believed that the worst was true and acted accordingly. I was furious! Who wouldn't have been?

I studied the jeweled watch on my wrist and then half closed my eyes and smiled the smile of the wily adventuress in the movies.

"Dear me, Larry," I drawled, "I had no idea that my affairs concerned you so much. I expected you to congratulate me, of course. You must admit that I did very well."

"You did!" Larry snapped savagely. "You managed to get your hands on one of the neatest fortunes in the West. Very clever!"

"Wasn't it?" I agreed.

But I felt weak. What on earth had that harebrained Billy let me in for? The minute he came back, he'd have to explain the whole thing to Larry right then and there. I was wild at Larry, of course, but I couldn't let him go on like this.

"Now, Larry," I began, with some vague idea of preparing him for Billy's explanation, "you know what a crazy, impetuous thing I am. I——"

"I don't know anything about you. There's nothing left of the girl I used to know."

"But I can explain——"

"No, you can't. Even you couldn't explain marrying that doddering old roué, and stealing—that's the real name for it—stealing that fortune—all of it, even their mother's inheritance—from those helpless children!"

"That's what he said to me," I told Billy Bachelder on the way home, "those very words. I don't know who I am; neither do you; but it's perfectly plain that I'm a most undesirable person who has done something awful—and you, Billy Bachelder, have got to find out just what it is. Oh, what made you get me into this?" I wailed. "If

that impulse of yours to combat the monotony of existence was too strong for you, what on earth made you select the name of Warrington?"

"Well, there's a bunch of Warrings around Denver," Billy defended himself, "and they all have money, and you had to be rich. What's a widow or two in a crowd like that?"

"But you ought to have reconnoitered the ground first, and not unearthed a skeleton the very first jump you made!"

But Billy declined to take the affair as gravely as I was convinced he should. He maintained that it was a joke, and that we'd all have no end of a laugh when the thing was over. Yes, I could see just what kind of a laugh it would be! Women aren't over-abundantly supplied with a sense of humor, anyhow, but what they have is in no degree ingrowing; they never laugh at themselves.

"Billy Bachelder," I remarked gloomily, as I stood at the elevator, "your main argument seems to be that the fact that I am doing something for one of my own sex, for her ultimate good, should be the one consolation I need. I happen to know just how far you can go with a woman for her own good—and it isn't far. All I can say is: Don't do it. And I have done it, and it's too late to do anything but go up to my room and select some unostentatious means of suicide."

While I was eating my breakfast the next morning, a great box of flowers arrived from no less a person than Nathalie Henderson's dancing man, Kenneth Witherspoon. A note accompanied them:

DEAR LADY: Will you have tea with me this afternoon at the Ritz? I do not suggest a dancing place, because I think it would be pleasanter for us to have tea quietly somewhere, so that we may get acquainted. Looking forward with more pleasure than I can tell to seeing you at four-thirty, I remain, faithfully yours,
KENNETH WITHERSPOON.

That note surpassed in insolence anything I ever read in my life. Observe that the young man took it serenely for granted that there would be no question of my declining his invitation. I read it again. "Dear lady"! That was enough. I am just naturally suspicious of any man who calls me "dear lady."

I knew an Italian count once who called me "cara signorina," and one of the few lucky things that have happened to me in my life is that I didn't marry his countship.

I tore the note into tiny bits, and my mind was still in a ruffled state when Billy called me up, about eleven. He sounded agitated—for Billy.

"We're in pretty deep," he began, without any softening preamble. "I tried to pump Larry Kirby at the club last night, but he shut up like a clam, after all but biting my head off. However, I managed to get quite a bit of information from Nathalie. Her idea seems to be that you have trapped me and are going to use me as a jimmy to get in with the right people here. Isn't that a joke?"

"A joke, Billy," I responded tartly, "greatly depends on the point of view. I'm sitting too close. Tell me, who is this Mrs. Curtis Warrington?"

"Sit down and get comfortable. You'll need support. Mrs. Curtis Giles Warrington is a pretty little adventuress from the Lord knows where, who got hold of Curtis Warrington in France just after the war started. Same old story—no money, no friends, and she had to get home. She met him in Paris, she married him in London, and, before they had been on the steamer two days, he died."

"Am I safe from a charge of murder?" I queried acidly.

"Oh, yes," Billy hastened to reassure me. "That part seems right enough. From all accounts, he was a gay bird, and his heart went back on him. But —here is the point: Before he died,

he made over all of his estate to his wife. There was practically nothing left for the children. They made an awful fight—undue influence and that sort of thing—but they didn't get a cent. And, as an added coincidence, Larry's firm handled the case for them."

"Nothing surprises me now," I commented dryly. "You've given me a lovely character, Billy Bachelder, and if you think I'm in so deep now I can't get out, you sadly underestimate me. The first thing for you to do——"

"But, Mona," Billy objected frantically, "don't you see it's too late to do anything now? You're panic-stricken, and you've lost your head. There's one way out and here it is: Smash up that affair between Nathalie and Wither-spoon, and we'll come off with flying colors. Afterward, when Nathalie sees what you've saved her from, it will be all right. Besides, the minute the master comes home, we'll let her in on the whole thing, and—— Well, you can trust the mater!"

"But, Billy, don't you see, Nathalie Henderson will be sure to talk?"

"Not much she won't!" He made a rather sickly attempt at a laugh of bravado, and then finished: "You see, Mona, I—I blackmailed Nathalie."

"You what?"

"Honestly, Mona, I didn't mean to do it," he confessed. "But when she lost her temper over the wire this morning, and said that if I didn't recall your Lakewood invitation, she would—when I saw all our fine and dandy plans going to smash—I sort of went berserk. I told her that she had only heard one side of the Warrington will trouble, but we, my mother and I, knew it all, and if we were taking your side, that was enough. She came down a little then, but she said that if you went to Lakewood, she wouldn't. So then I did it."

"Tell me. I've already lost any illusions I may have had about you."

"I told her that I wasn't going to have the girl that the mater is standing social sponsor for put in an uncertain light by any such stunt as that. Then I took a deep breath, prayed a little prayer, and said with an air of villainy: 'You haven't been so discreet yourself lately, Nathalie Henderson, that you can afford to cast any stones. You are going to Lakewood.' Then I paused and snapped, 'Get me?' She did. I was bluffing, but it worked."

"Well, you've wasted your time. I'm not going."

We had an awful argument, but in the end I was beaten. I'm not an absolute imbecile, and Billy was able to make me see that we were in too deep to do anything but keep going. As a casual afterthought, just to involve an already impossible situation, Billy added before he hung up:

"Oh, by the way, I told Larry Kirby you were expecting him to luncheon. He seemed surprised, but willing. You'd better keep up the 'There's-always-two-sides-to-a-story' stuff. He seems inclined to blame your father, anyhow. Play up on that."

"I'll do nothing of the sort! I think you're—"

But my thoughts apparently held no interest for Billy, because he clicked up his receiver and departed.

I told Aunt Luella the whole thing. I had to tell somebody or lose my reason. She made a dreadful time about it. She said flatly that she wouldn't have one thing to do with any part of such an unheard-of thing, and ended the argument by tying up her head with menthol and alcohol and going to bed. That left me to face Larry Kirby alone for luncheon.

He was coldly, calmly, dispassionately polite.

"Why did you come at all, if that's the way you felt about me?" I burst out at last, in exasperation.

Larry stooped and handed me my vanity bag.

"You asked me, for one thing; and another thing is you implied yesterday that there was another side of the story. I'm giving you the benefit of the doubt."

He wasn't; I could see that plainly. He believed every single thing about me, or rather about Mrs. Curtis Warington, admitted no extenuating circumstance, and was doggedly determined to stick to that stand until somebody proved him wrong. And Larry is the type that is never proved absolutely wrong—to himself. But still he had come. It gave me hope to experiment. Either Larry was of the sort that loved to bite on a jumping tooth—or he cared. So I leaned forward and smiled.

"Let's not talk about me, Larry," I said softly. "We won't get anywhere. Let's talk about you. Begin by telling me what you are doing in New York."

"I live here. My firm had so much Eastern business that we decided on a permanent representative in New York. I was glad to come. There was a lot in Frisco I wanted to forget."

"You mean—" I paused and sighed. At that moment it was no effort for me to look wistful and unhappy.

Larry attacked his chop savagely.

"Yes, I mean you. Oh, Mona, why didn't you have the courage to come with me that night?"

"That night, when the moon was coming up over the redwoods, why didn't I come?" I paused and laughed a little bitterly. "You didn't ask me."

"Mona!"

"Did you? I think not. I would have heard—I was listening with all my heart. You said—"

"I remember. I said that the moon, the sea, the wind sighing through the trees, could make a fool of any man; and when you added to that a girl—a girl with great dark tempting eyes, eyes that said things when her lips left off—

when you made a combination like that, there was only one thing to do."

"And you did it."

"I took you into my arms and kissed you. Is that what you mean?"

"It is. You neglected to ask me to marry you."

Larry Kirby stared at me a minute. Then he put down his fork and took a quick gulp of his high ball.

"Mona, didn't you know—"

"I wanted to be told. Larry, listen to me. Wasn't it natural? You know how I was brought up, the kind of a life I've lived—Paris, Hongkong, India, seeing the best and the worst of men. I had never had any sort of a position. Until I met Billy Bachelder's mother, I had never had a woman friend in my life. A good many men have told me they loved me; a few have asked me to marry them. I had learned to be afraid. I had to be sure with you."

"Why? Tell me, Mona."

"I— Why, don't you see, Larry — You must have seen—"

"Ah, here you are, dear lady! Your aunt told me I should find you here. How are you, Larry?"

I could cheerfully have killed Kenneth Witherspoon as he bowed over my hand. Or, rather, I could cheerfully have stood by while Larry throttled him with his own pale-green handkerchief. Larry looked capable of it.

I had to ask Kenneth Witherspoon to sit down, and immediately the talk was of mice and men and sailing ships, or some other equally inane subjects dignifying polite torture.

When Larry, after an apologetic glance at his watch, rose—Kenneth Witherspoon showed every evidence of becoming a fixture—he said to me in a quick undertone:

"Until to-morrow."

"But—you are not going to Lakewood, are you?"

"Yes, I am. I want my question answered."

There was a look in his green-gray eyes that made my heart give a little joyful jump.

Perhaps this is what made me almost gracious to Kenneth Witherspoon that afternoon. He made an awful hit with Aunt Luella, who finally was persuaded to abandon her smelling salts and come to tea with us. His clothes impressed her, especially the handkerchief tucked in his cuff; his manner—not his manners, you understand—impressed her, too; and when half the women in the Ritz bowed to him, and the other half looked as if they'd like to, her joy was boundless.

Billy Bachelder said he had already breakfasted when he called for me the next morning, but he let Aunt Luella prevail upon him to try some hot waffles, and he was still deep in the joy of them when they announced that Mr. Kirby's car was waiting.

"Are we going in Larry's car?" I asked in surprise, as we shot down in the elevator.

Billy was struggling to fasten his coat collar under his third chin.

"Yes," he gasped. "For some reason—I couldn't make head or tail to Nathalie's jumbled explanation—Jim Henderson isn't going. So Kenneth Witherspoon, Nathalie, and you and I, are going to drive down with Larry. By the way"—he beamed on me—"I saw you with Witherspoon at the Ritz yesterday. I think you've got him going. Good work!"

"Won't Mr. Henderson be with us at all?" I asked, ignoring Billy's congratulation.

"My dear girl, what's a husband? This is New York!"

And he revolved himself out of the door into the arms of Kenneth Witherspoon, who was waiting with a bunch of violets.

Larry Kirby was sitting behind the wheel of a great yellow touring car, and he looked at me and then smiled down

at the empty seat beside him. Nathalie, looking like a little girl in her gray squirrel coat and cap, was curled up in the corner of the tonneau. She was watching Kenneth Witherspoon make his "dear lady" speech to me and, judging from her expression, she was far from pleased.

Billy squinted up into the sky.

"It's snowing!" he exclaimed. "And look at those clouds!"

"They're wind clouds," Larry answered. "It's only going to be a flurry."

"Flurry or no, it makes up my mind for me," Billy announced with decision. "I've got a cold, anyhow, and I'm not aiming to start off on a sixty-mile run in a blizzard. Mona, go in and order hot waffles for five."

"Dear boy," Kenneth Witherspoon protested, as he tucked me into the tonneau, where I had no desire to be; "there is not going to be a blizzard."

But Billy continued to object all the way over to the ferry, sandwiching his objections between regrets for the waffles he might at the moment have been eating.

Nathalie Henderson, too, didn't strike me as being a great addition to the party. She was not the type of woman who submits gracefully to anything. She had been made to come on this trip, and it was plain to be seen from the first that she was determined to make it as unpleasant for everybody as possible. She scratched—oh, in a perfectly soft, purring way!—whenever she saw an opportunity, and when she didn't, she made one. When we reached the ferry, I wanted nothing so much as to shake that little blond vixen and to go home and weep with helpless rage.

"Don't you care?" Billy tried to comfort me, as we stood at the bow of the boat watching the clouds of snow drift down the river. "She's jealous. I told her about the tea party at the Ritz. It seems that her dancing man broke an engagement with her to take you there.

He's a speedy little boy—what? Nathalie was wild! I think she's had more trouble with Jim, too."

"Is that the reason he isn't here today?"

"Search me!" He shivered deeper into his collar. "Honestly," he complained fretfully, "of all fool stunts, this is thefoolest! This storm is getting worse, instead of better. Flurry indeed! If Larry Kirby didn't think he could get that car of his through anything, he'd take my advice and turn back."

But Larry wouldn't hear of turning back. He told Billy scornfully to tuck himself into the tonneau and burrow into the rugs. I took Billy's place in the front, and truly I welcomed the change.

As Billy helped me in, he glanced significantly at Larry.

"The path of duty is hard at best," he whispered. "If there's a rose or two along the way, pick it."

I began to share Billy's sentiments about the weather as we left the town behind us and struck the country roads. They looked as if the snow had been falling for hours. It wasn't exactly a blizzard, as Billy had called it—not then, at least—but it was a kind of steady snowfall, just falling, falling; great, white, heavy flakes that drifted across the roads and clung to the trees, weighing down the branches on either side of the way. When we stopped for lunch at a quaint old English inn, the landlord earnestly advised us against trying to make Lakewood, and kept on advising until Larry was quite nasty about it. He herded us all into the car, and none of us had much to say as we drove through mile after mile of a dense, white, chilling curtain of snow.

After about an hour, Larry stopped and looked at the "Blue Book," and he and Nathalie Henderson—who had got very nervous and irritable—had two arguments about the right road. As we came to a crossroads, I stood up and

tried to read the snow-covered signs. Kenneth Witherspoon, ignoring Billy's peevish protest that he was pulling the robe off his knees, stood up, too.

"To the right, old chap," he directed Larry.

"Are you sure?" Larry asked. "I think that road leads to Marville—"

"It does, but it's a short cut, and you pick up the State road the other side of Three Rivers."

"I hope you know what you're talking about," Larry growled, as he swung through a heavy drift to the right. "The roads are getting worse by the minute, and two or three miles out of our way means something."

As Kenneth Witherspoon was about to sit down, he leaned over me.

"Dear lady, was it kind to desert me?" And he took a pale-gray handkerchief out of his fur cuff and dusted a snowflake off my cheek.

The muscles along Larry Kirby's jaw rippled, and his eyes looked like those of an angry cat.

"Very fetching trick!" he drawled icily. "You've made good use of your time with Witherspoon, haven't you? Don't you know he's supposed to belong on Nathalie Henderson's hearth-rug?"

"Oh, there are no such things as game laws as far as a widow is concerned," I told him lightly. Then I leaned over and smiled up audaciously into his face.

He started back distantly for a minute; then his gaze softened and he risked all our lives by laying his hand on mine.

"I'm a brute!" he muttered.

"Oh, see who's here!" Billy suddenly sang out from the tonneau.

A six-foot drift lay in the road ahead, and, as Larry quickly shifted his gears into first and tried to plow through, it heaped up and piled over the radiator.

"Go round to the side," Billy suggested. "It's blown off there."

"Look out for the ditch," I warned. But it was too late. As Larry felt the car slide, he pulled the wheel desperately around, but the rear wheels skidded, and the whole car slipped off the road and settled down on one side. Larry stopped the engine and got out.

"Now see what you've done, Billy Bachelder!" Nathalie Henderson wailed, glancing nervously at the watch on her wrist. "We're ditched—and goodness knows when we'll get out!"

"See what I've done?" Billy repeated, on the defensive at once. "It's not my fault that we ditched on a road we don't know, miles from nowhere. Blame Witherspoon. Why didn't he let Larry alone back there at the crossroads?"

"All out," Larry ordered from somewhere in the rear, and we plunged round the car and found him wrapping an extra chain around the rear tire.

We were in that ditch for four mortal hours. Larry Kirby worked like two men, and Billy, between sneezes, did his best. I stood about and held wrenches and chains, but Nathalie and Kenneth Witherspoon were almost no help at all. She drove the men to smothered profanity by her frenzied exhortations to haste, and by asking them all individually, at the rate of once every ten minutes, what time it was getting to be. It was the most exasperating thing in the world then, but now, looking back over it all, I am able to see her point of view from a different angle.

Larry finally looked hopelessly up and down the road.

"There's only one thing left," he said. "We'll have to get fence rails." He looked into the tonneau where Witherspoon was bundled up in a corner. "That counts you in, Witherspoon."

"Oh, but really, my dear chap," Witherspoon protested. "I'm not dressed for plunging about in the snow. I'm not, you know."

"Too bad!" Billy snapped. And he

and Larry waited until Kenneth Witherspoon climbed unwillingly out; then they all disappeared up the road.

I watched them through the blinding snow as long as they were in sight, and then I managed to work the sign from the front and tried to dig some of the half-frozen mud and snow from under the rear wheels. Nathalie watched me for a minute, and then, with a plaintive sigh, found a board and followed my example. She didn't accomplish much, because every two minutes she would stand up and anxiously scan the horizon.

"It's getting awfully late," she said nervously at last. "We've simply got to get out soon. I must telephone my husband by seven, at the very latest. I think it's later than those boys will admit, and my watch is never right. Have you a watch?"

I opened my coat and, when I told her the hour, she slipped and landed a boardful of snow down my neck.

"There, I knew it!" she almost screamed. "Five o'clock! Five o'clock! And we're forty miles from Lakewood—and we're lost—"

"Oh, not as bad as that," I interrupted as calmly as I could, as I sat down on the running board and tried to dig some of the snow out of my collar.

Nathalie Henderson just stood there in a drift up over her knees and wrung her hands.

"Not as bad as that? It's as bad as it could possibly be! Oh, Mrs. Warrington, it will be hours before we get to Lakewood! I'm in the most dreadful trouble! What shall I do? What shall I do?"

I couldn't tell her. I didn't even dare sympathize with her. I didn't know whether she would throw herself gratefully upon my shoulder or rend me into bits and dance on the pieces. But, as things stood now, I felt we would all be given a share of Nathalie's bur-

den, whatever it was, soon enough. She's the kind that lets the emotional bars down and invites the other fellow to do the worrying.

I was pretty relieved, I can tell you, to see the men loom up out of the snow.

"Why, what have we here?" Billy demanded, dropping his end of the rail on Kenneth Witherspoon, as he caught sight of his cousin.

Nathalie Henderson sank down on a snowdrift and burst into tears. Larry Kirby strode over and jerked her to her feet.

"Get up out of that snow! Do you want to catch pneumonia?"

"Billy," she cried, wrenching herself free and catching Billy's shoulders and trying to shake him, "we must get out of this at once! We must get somewhere! I've got to telephone Jim—now!"

"Well, I'll tell you now, you can't. Why the mad haste, anyhow?"

Nathalie looked at us all in turn like a little trapped animal. Then she lost all semblance of self-control.

"Oh, I might as well tell it!" she cried, throwing up her hands. "Everybody will know it, anyway! Jim, of course, will believe the worst—you know, Billy, you warned me about Jim's jealousy before I married—and he'll divorce me—"

"What are you talking about, Nathalie?" Larry cut in sternly.

"This," and she waved her hand toward the car. "When I left that note for Jim, could I have known this would happen? I only left it to get even with him because he wouldn't go to Lakewood."

"Note? What note? What did you write?"

You know how men take instant alarm at a scrap of paper, and now all three men pressed about her in anxious inquiry.

"I wrote a note saying I was going

away forever—but, of course, I figured that after giving him a bad hour, I could call him up from Lakewood and tell him it was all a joke."

A stricken silence enveloped us, and when it broke, each plunged into the vortex all right.

"It's a joke, all right!" Larry observed grimly. "Only it happens to be on us."

Billy had tossed up his arms and was calling upon high heaven to witness the emotional unreliability of woman.

"That's always the way! Never knew it to fail! Just let a woman get into a tight place, let her go off on an emotional jag, and what does she do? She writes! If the sex had been born with the writer's cramp, the world would have been spared a lot."

"You didn't—Nathalie—y—you didn't mention *me*?" Kenneth Witherspoon quavered. He stood staring down at Nathalie, his handkerchief hanging limply from his cuff.

"No, I didn't. But I might as well have. Jim will guess you."

"Oh, my God! This is awful! Something must be done!" And he crumpled up in a despairing heap on the running board.

"Couldn't we telephone?" I suggested.

"When we get out," Larry suggested dryly.

And, with this impetus, even Kenneth Witherspoon was what he imagined was helpful. Nathalie was weeping in everybody's way until Larry told me to walk her up and down the road, and, when we came back after one of our turns, the car was out of the ditch and the engine running, waiting to be off.

But we found that the added hours had made the roads almost impassable. Larry, in first speed, rammed through one drift after another, and then, with a hopeless shrug, shut off his engine and looked up to the top of the hills

where the lights of a farmhouse pricked their way through the growing dusk.

"We're not going to make it," he said. "Nathalie, in case they have a telephone up there at the house, and I am able to get your house, can you trust your maid to destroy that note? That is, if Jim hasn't found it already?"

Nathalie weepingly said that she supposed she'd have to, and Larry, pulling his cap down over his eyes, plunged through the drifts. I watched him fighting his way across the fields of snow and thought that, at any other time and in any other condition, I would have enjoyed the picture before me—the falling snow, the draped trees, and the little house on the hill, with the lamp shining out through the storm. It only lacked a bit of holly thrown across the dull horizon line to make it a perfect Christmas card. I had plenty of time to admire it, because it was ages before Larry got back.

"Well?" we all cried out at him. "Did they have a telephone? Did you get the house?"

"Yes," Larry pronounced without any softening preliminaries. "Jim had come in, found the note, and gone out, leaving no message."

Nathalie crumpled up with a despairing wail, and Billy told her at once that, while he was sorry for her, it was a pity she had to drag the rest of us into her domestic affairs.

Meanwhile, Larry was having his own troubles. He had trouble in the first place getting the motor started, and then we couldn't get through the next drift. We tried until the engine stalled, and then Larry backed out and turned into the narrow roadway that led up the hill to the house.

"Where are you going?" Nathalie demanded.

"We can't get through these roads; that's clear," Larry flung over his shoulder. "We'll have to stay here all night. That man's wife is sick in bed, and he

won't want us, but he can't turn us out in such a storm."

"Larry Kirby, you're mad!" Nathalie shrieked. "I won't do it—I can't! Why, you—anybody can see the utter impossibility of that for me!"

"I say, old chap—" Kenneth Witherspoon began to protest, and Larry appeared to need just that to slip the cog of his temper.

"Well, what do you suggest? The walking is good. Why don't you try it?"

Kenneth Witherspoon subsided, and Billy came to the front and sided definitely with Larry. He said he was cold and starving and that his voice was changing by the minute. He added plaintively that pneumonia was nearly always fatal to a fat man.

Nathalie Henderson blamed what followed on me. She said it was my hair and my leather motor coat and the fact that Billy called, "Mona, see if you can find the remnants of a drink in that thermos bottle?" just as the former opened the door, that got us all in wrong. I maintain that it was Larry Kirby's message that made the farmer suspicious in the first place. Anyway, no matter what it was, he came to the door, when Billy had fallen up the steps and knocked, and, after looking us all over, said he couldn't possibly put us up—people he knew nothing about at all—and then he closed the door. I thought Billy would throw himself on the threshold and weep. He looked as if he were going to for a minute; then he rapped determinedly and, when the farmer reopened the door, stepped inside.

Presently he came out and began to pile the cases out on the porch.

"We're going to stay," he announced. Then he straightened up and fixed us all with a threatening eye. "Now, you people, just remember this. It's this farmhouse or the open road. We're in no position to make terms. That

farmer wanted our family histories, also marriage certificates, before he would even hear of putting us up."

I, for one, felt what was coming, but you could tell the rest did not by the perfect storm that burst over Billy when he announced what he had done—simply married us, willy-nilly, just like that! Paired us off impulsively, the first two that came into his erratic head! Nathalie and Kenneth Witherspoon—as if her affairs were not in a precarious enough state without that—and Larry and me. I must say that Larry might, in common politeness, have looked a little—well, if not pleased, at least resigned. In fact, nobody looked pleased, and when the waves of wrath had finally rolled over Billy, I expected to see him drenched in repentance. But not at all. He was highly incensed.

"Why didn't somebody else undertake this delicate diplomatic business, then? Here I've fixed you all up, and— Oh, you're an ungrateful lot! Command me to my friends for gratitude!"

Larry got out.

"What's the use?" he said. "Of course Billy may not be such an idiot as this sounds, and things may be as bad as he paints them—but I'd almost rather take the open road."

"Thanks awfully," I drawled.

"I mean on Nathalie's account."

But I refused to be placated, and marched into the house with my head up.

It was a lovely old room—square, with old mahogany furniture pushed back against the wall and a big fireplace with a great fire roaring up the chimney. Billy crowded in so close that in five minutes he set himself on fire and smelled the whole place up. The farmer—his name was Collins—had turned us loose in that room, but you could plainly see that, in herding us

there, he meant us to stay there. He intimated as much in a way quite beyond all misunderstanding.

We were all thoroughly wet and, after a whispered conference, the men retired to the barn with their suit cases. Billy's voice had sunk to a hoarse whisper, and he advised us over his shoulder to finish the contents of his flask and get into our evening clothes and not stay about in our wet things. It was a case with us of cold and wet in our suits, or cold and dry in our evening clothes. They were not, either mine or Nathalie's, cut for comfort as regards anything except dancing. I wish you could have seen Collins' face when he came in and saw them!

The minute Billy arrived back, resplendent in his dinner jacket, he demanded food. He had quite a soulful talk with Collins about it, but it was not for hours that he could induce him to give us even bread and butter and tea. You know how pleasant it is to be shut up in a small room with *one* hungry man. Imagine three! And Nathalie made them worse by diving to the telephone every ten minutes. Kenneth Witherspoon regarded her with an expression of injured dignity and refused to be pried from my side; which, considering the relations that Billy Bachelder had forced upon us all, was either natural or unnatural, depending upon which section of the country you come from. Finally I could stand it no longer.

"Billy Bachelder," I demanded, "what on earth made you make that arrangement between Nathalie and Kenneth Witherspoon? Anybody else—"

"That, my dear Mona," he retorted airily, "was a stroke of genius. Did you see Kenneth Witherspoon's face when I forced Nathalie upon him? He's the kind that loves all the married ladies until something happens to the husband—then he runs like 'mad. Harken to me! Before this trip is over

Nathalie Henderson is going to get the lesson of her life."

"I believe you," I returned dryly.

"For Heaven's sake, Billy," Larry expostulated here, "will you please drag Nathalie away from that telephone. She's called up her house five times, and every club that Jim Henderson ever belonged to in his life."

"I don't care," Nathalie insisted stubbornly, in answer to Billy's remonstrances. "None of the rest of you seem disposed to do anything, and I just can't sit here and wait and wait for—oh, I don't know what!"

"What can we do but wait?"

"Nothing—at least none of you men
— Now, if Jim were here—"

"Quite so," Larry interrupted caustically. "But allow me to remind you, my dear Nathalie, that if Jim were here, the whole thing would never have happened, and I for one sincerely wish he were here."

"Well, I don't," Billy declared positively. "I know Jim. He has a short temper and a long reach!"

Kenneth Witherspoon got up abruptly and began to pace the room nervously. Larry grinned and retired to the corner, with the large family Bible that he found on one corner of the mantel. Finally he looked up impatiently.

"Can't you sit down quietly—not one of you? You're all prowling about this room like a lot of caged beasts."

"That's what I feel like," Nathalie returned with spirit. "Oh, for goodness' sake, somebody suggest something to do, or I'll lose my mind!"

"What you are pleased to call your mind," Billy corrected her gently; then, at her expression, he hastened to add soothingly: "Now, there, never mind! Let's see if Collins has any cards. We might play bridge. You ask him, Witherspoon. I got the supper—if you can call it that. My stomach feels like an empty house at the moment."

"Dear chap, really, now—"

"I'll ask him," Nathalie said.

But Collins didn't have any cards, and he was very disagreeable about it, too, when Nathalie asked him. However, it appeared that the hired man was given to a game of solitaire now and again, and upon request, he produced some dog-eared pasteboards that at one time, back in the dark ages, might have been a deck of cards.

That bridge game will remain one of the nightmares of my life. Nathalie didn't want to play, but Billy made her, because he said that Kenneth Witherspoon might be all there on the dancing floor, but at a bridge table he took a chance on his life. Nathalie was as jumpy as a cat, and repeatedly failed Billy at some crucial moment. Billy is an earnest bridge player and, needless to say, this pained him and then exasperated him.

"Oh, buck up, Nathalie!" he commanded presently. "What if Jim does believe the worst? What's a divorce? Done in moderation, it's considered rather smart."

"Billy, you were never cut out to be a funny man," I observed, taking pity on his cousin.

Billy sighed, and then glanced with malicious inspiration at Kenneth Witherspoon.

"No, I suppose not," he admitted gravely. "It's all a question of what we were cut out for. Now, Witherspoon, here, was undoubtedly cut out for a correspondent. Every modern divorce play I've seen, every book of the kind I've read, had a man in it just like Kenneth, here. Too bad, old chap, but you simply can't marry our Merry Widow! You weren't cut out for it."

"Billy, I bid two hearts," Larry interposed after a glance at Nathalie. "Get into the game."

"I am in the game," Billy insisted. He made three no-trumps—he didn't have Larry's hearts protected at that—

and laid down his dummy for Nathalie to play.

He evidently saw that his present line of light persiflage was cutting Kenneth Witherspoon to the quick, and either because he didn't see, or wouldn't see, that Nathalie was bearing more than her share of his caustic humor, he went right on. I tried to make him stop, and so did Larry, but after Larry had been practically insulted, he threw down his hand and stamped out.

We heard him talking to Collins out on the porch, and presently he came back to say that he was going down to the next farm to try and hire a pair of mules that Collins said could get through anything.

Kenneth Witherspoon took his place at the bridge table and, after dropping his handkerchief out of his cuff, queried nervously:

"Ahem—ah—Billy, old chap, of course you're jesting when you intimate that this—this little—ah—adventure is likely to have serious consequences?"

"Not to *me*," Billy rejoined significantly.

"No, I'll be the sufferer," Nathalie broke in bitterly. "I stand to lose everything I value in the world."

"All except Kenneth," Billy consoled her. "He'll stand by you, of course."

"What do you mean?" Witherspoon asked quickly.

"Why, the usual thing—the expected thing."

"You mean that—that I'll be expected to marry Nathalie Henderson?"

Billy spread his hands and beamed.

"What else?"

"Well, I won't! To begin with, this whole thing is a joke to everybody but me. What about me? I'm young—I'm not going to have my career spoiled like that. It's all Nathalie's fault. I told her she was too indiscreet."

"You little cad!" I exclaimed.

He turned to me in desperation.

"But surely *you*, dear lady, you see why I can't! Why, it's for you—"

"Now, just a minute—" Billy broke in.

But at that moment the telephone rang, and we heard Collins go out into the hall to answer it.

"Yes, yes— No, it isn't. Henderson? I don't know—"

Nathalie was out of her chair and into the hall.

"It's my husband!" she gasped. "Give me the receiver—quick!" Her voice broke and she sobbed. "Jim—oh, Jim! What? Yes, I know, but I can explain—yes, I can. That note was a joke. It's all Billy's fault. Wait, I'll call him."

She ran to Billy and shook his arm frantically.

"He has traced the car," she said, through chattering teeth. "You know we all advised Larry against that yellow color. Oh, Billy, Jim's in an awful rage! Tell him anything, anything at all! Only you must make him see—"

Billy began all right, but he forgot that his voice was not dependable, and when he lost his temper, as he did almost at once, it went completely back on him and rose to a thin, protesting squeak. Then he banged up the receiver.

"This is sure our day!" he commented grimly. "I couldn't make him listen to reason—mainly because he didn't recognize my voice with this confounded cold and wouldn't believe it was me. Oh, we're in for something exciting! Jim Henderson is on his way here with a gun. Now the whole thing rests on Larry."

"As usual," I observed.

Kenneth Witherspoon rose with upraised hand.

"I will take my share," he pronounced blandly. "I'll offer a suggestion."

"Well, I'll tell you, before I hear it,

that I don't think much of it," snapped Billy.

"Ah, old chap, but wait! Now, as I see this ridiculous situation, I seem to be the bone of contention. The thing to do is to eliminate me."

"I agree so far," I assented.

"Dear lady!" he murmured. "We must think up a plausible story for my presence here. Now I suggest this for a story: Let us say that this house party is in honor of my engagement. That, of course, eliminates me as far as Mrs. Henderson is concerned."

"Also eliminates Nathalie as far as you are concerned. Rather neat! And whom have you selected for your victim? I should fancy she might have something to say. In fact—"

"Yes, who?" I asked innocently.

Kenneth Witherspoon bowed.

"You, dear lady."

Well, would you believe it, everybody seemed to seize upon this with the utmost enthusiasm but me? Even Billy seemed more than ready to place me on the sacrificial altar.

I shrugged and gave in.

"All right. But remember this, Billy Bachelor—there's nothing permanent in this engagement."

Nathalie had gone out on the porch to look for Larry, and Billy called gayly over his shoulder as he followed her:

"I should worry! This is to-day. Being engaged and being married are as far apart as the poles."

Kenneth Witherspoon leaned over me as I stood dejectedly staring at myself in the mirror.

"Will it be so hard, dear lady?" he murmured.

And at that moment Larry opened the door and stamped in.

Kenneth Witherspoon advanced with outstretched hand.

"Congratulate me, old chap," he said. "My engagement to Mrs. Warren—"

"What?" Larry positively roared.

He glared at Kenneth Witherspoon for a moment, and that gentleman, after facing the glare as long as he could, smiled weakly and faded out onto the porch. Larry folded his arms and sneered at me:

"And what is it now?" he demanded. "You tried love—I flatter myself you cared for me once, you see—and you tried intrigue and marrying for money. What is it now? Kenneth Witherspoon! A dancing man! My God, Mona, he represents a third sex!"

That marked the last milestone for me. I looked at Larry and made up my mind then and there that I had had enough. I called in Billy and told him so. Before I had said ten words, he lost his head and, after a panic-stricken glance at the others, drew Nathalie and me out into the kitchen.

There, Billy and I, interrupting each other every third sentence, told Nathalie Henderson the whole thing—and I must say that, after the first gust, she accepted it better than I ever supposed she would. Billy seemed to think that it was all over but the shouting then, but Nathalie was of another mind.

"All over for Mona—you don't mind my calling you 'Mona'?" she smiled at me—"but it doesn't help me, as far as I can see. I can understand—I suppose I must have deserved it all—but will Jim understand?"

"Hardly, I should say," I commented. You know, yourself, no man likes to think that his affairs have reached such a state that his friends have to take a hand. Anyhow, kindly solicitude, when you're dealing with a man, is apt to approach perilously near, in his opinion, to minding his business.

Billy and Nathalie consulted, and finally Billy left to see what Larry could suggest.

"Tell me about Larry," Nathalie asked the minute he had gone.

I walked over and began to examine the line of blue-and-white spice jars that stood in an orderly row upon the shelf beside the window.

"There's nothing to tell," I said.

"Well, you don't have to tell me anything," Nathalie laughed softly. "Don't worry, Mona. I've been pretty much of a selfish idiot, I guess, but there's no reason why anybody should pay the price except me."

She came over and, taking my hand, rubbed it against her soft cheek. I didn't look around, and presently she laughed again, and I heard her go out and the door close softly.

Almost at once, it opened again, and when I looked over my shoulder, Larry Kirby was sitting on the kitchen table swinging his feet and laughing at me.

"I suppose you think the situation funny," I said. "Well, I don't. The fact is still before us that the stage is all set for the big third act. And, from my knowledge of such a situation, the man with the gun controls it."

"Oh, rats!" Larry scoffed elegantly. "I'll take care of Jim. He has a long, cold ride ahead of him in which to cool his temper—and when he's not mad, Jim's reasonable enough. The truth will be easy enough for him to believe, because he'll want to believe it. Nathalie, of course, has a bad hour ahead of her, but she has it coming to her. And Witherspoon doesn't count one way or the other."

"Naturally," I agreed.

Larry smiled.

"Billy has explained——"

"All right," I interrupted. "Don't tell me about it. I've had enough explanations to last me always."

"Yes?" Larry drawled, getting off the table. "I never was keen for explanations myself. I hold that the only way to explain a thing to a woman is to kiss her."

I suppose it's as good a way as any.



"THE LINE'S BUSY!"

By Albert Edward Ullman

ICE WATER FOR 711

DEAR MABEL: Suppose you think I've been treating you like I was a rich relation—not writing for so long—but I've been so busy fixing up my little old two-by-four that I'm working in my sleep. And say, girlie, you won't know it next time you send up your card. The furniture—all two pieces—is painted white, and the carpet 'most covered up, so you can't see them roses—or red cabbages, judging from their size—any more. That school-teacher what lives in the front room says it's some Renaissance. Guess she means them lace curtains the landlady thinks so much of, being afraid to send them to the laundry because it would mean good night curtains! Anyways, as soon as that raise comes, I'm going to set myself back for a new pair.

Also, I got a regular art gallery. I think George has been reading about them collections millionaires are giving away every day, and got the bee. Anyhow, he sends me pictures of the Duchess of Devonshire and Madam Pompadour and a lot of haughty dames, by a messenger boy. You know the five-and-ten store don't deliver anything. Well, it certainly makes things more cheerfullike, and since I broke the mirror, I haven't had anything to look at. After this I suppose I'm in for a proposal—seeing he's got his heart out of

his pocket—and you know his fifteen per and my cooking would be as good a combination to start married life with as a set of boxing gloves. Of course I ain't taking him serious, though he's a nice boy and handy to have around. Probably he has to practice on some one, and it might as well be me. And mebbe it's safer for him at that, for some other girl might say yes, and then what he'd find out about two living cheaper than one would turn his hair white over the first pay day.

It's funny, Mabel, when you come to think of it—though I ain't referring to George—how extravagant some men are when they're after a girl. Why, every time you turn around, it's a box of candy, and they wouldn't leave you carry it for fear you'd get callouses on your hands. And after they marry you—and this goes for a lot of 'em—they bring you candy about as often as Christmas comes around, and let you do light exercises with the dishes and scrubbing brush from morning till night. It's getting harder every day to pick out the right kind of man, and you can read all this "Advice to Lovers" in the newspapers and know as much as you did before you started. Mebbe I'm wrong, but I always had a hunch that the boy who looks before he spends and is saving up for a building lot is about the right thing when it comes to

"Safety First." That's some motto for an automobile or a woman—both being expensive.

Well, I've been so busy talking about myself I guess you'll think woman has the vote and I'm running for office. There isn't much news about the big hote, only they've put a stenographer 'longside my switchboard. It was a little hard at first, trying to listen over the wire with that machine ticking away, and I was going to register a kick, but she looked so nice and quiet-like that I just didn't. Afterward I learns it's her first job, and if people don't want any letters written, it's going to be pretty hard on her. She's a sad-looking little thing, and that won't help her business any. She may learn after a while that a smile is a big brother to little old success—and the bigger the smile, the better.

I almost forgot to tell you that we've got a new chef. They say he can cook eggs two thousand different ways—all except hard-boiled. The one we had cooked too many things what folks has to eat at home. Pierre says you got to puzzle people—give 'em something new—and besides you can't charge more than sixty cents for stewed oysters, but you can extract two dollars for oysters Muckamuck, or something like that. Calling an innocent oyster names costs money nowadays. Yours,

GOLDIE.

DEAR MABEL: Some busy because a lot of families have been arriving almost every day, and you know women only want a little, but that little is always something a hotel ain't got. Running a place like this is about as pleasant as tickling a shark under the chin. Guess some women come to live in hotels 'cause they love their husbands so much they won't cook for 'em, while others think it a proper place to bring up a dog. There's so many of the last kind here now that the place looks like

a dog show when they start to parade out for their ride in the park. John, the head porter, says that when he ain't being bitten by them, he's being bitten by something else. He's only got one ambition now—to be a meal ticket for a bloodhound. Believe me, it must be lovely for a tired husband to blow in after the day's rush and sit around watching wifey mushing over three pounds of mutt at one hundred dollars per pound. Honest, from the fuss they gets made over 'em, you'd think children were almost as good.

My little friend Dorothea—the emphasis being on the "e," like in tea when it's weak—says they're just darlings. She's the new stenog—or typist, as she calls it—I told you about, and with all her education, she oughta know. You see, we're real chummy now, and she's starting to tell me her troubles when she isn't reading books, which is 'most all the time. Says Marie Corelli and Hall Caine is her favorite English authors—they make her cry so. Sounds funny, doesn't it, when you know there's so many tears in life without shopping for 'em in a public library? Of course I could figure out a person being so happy they'd want to read something sad just for variety, but her lot ain't so bright but what scouring powder would do some good. Poor little girlie, she had everything she wanted until her father, who was an inventor or something, got sick and spent all he had trying to get well. That's why she started in here—hoping to earn enough to keep things a-going.

So far as business goes, she's strictly on the job and doesn't do much chinning with the few customers she has. The young dear says she just hates men. Only I notice a rather husky, pink-faced chap standing around her on one foot now and then, but she gives me to understand that he's a friend of her father's. He must be pretty fond of the old gent from the way he looks

at her—something like a bear, all ready to hug. Take it from me, though, love ain't as blind as they say—just near-sighted.

Fixed up my old dress by taking off about six inches at the bottom of the skirt—they'll be wearing 'em as short as kilties next—and putting a strip of fur around. Found the fur in a little place on the East Side for two dollars. First, the man wanted five and says it was seal, but I tells him his kind of seals walked on back fences every night, and he got wise to himself. Anyways, it looks all to the good, and it ain't my pet what's missing.

When I blows in this morning, the boy at the door holds it open, thinking I'm a real paying guest, and that fresh head clerk makes believe I'm that duchess of something they're expecting to arrive. You know I had on new pumps and a hat—altering the old dress made that easy. Honest, Mabel, it must be fine to have everything new all at once. Seems to me that by the time I gets a dress, the shoes is worn out, and by the time I gets shoes, the hat has passed away from general delapidation. Mebbe, after all, things are no worse for me than for some dames who has to keep up with the fashion, wearing straw hats in winter and velvet ones in summer. Happiness, I guess, is just the way one has of looking at things. Strawberries in July are just as good as strawberries in January; and Jimmie, wearing next to nothing and playing in the mud, is having more fun than Rollo, all dressed up and no place to go.

Yours, GOLDIE.

DEAR MABEL: George came around last eve. I thought he had made his farewell appearance, but he's as bad as them actor people what are always coming back. He says that he was taking some civil-service examinations and that studying to be a letter carrier is harder than studying to be a president.

Anyways, the movies were some improvement on the night before, which was a sure-enough literary at home for little Goldie. You remember me telling you about Dorothea being some bookish. Well, she brought me down about five pounds of books the other day and asks me to read 'em. It was real nice of her, and you know I'll try almost anything once. The first one was written by a party with a name that people would think you was choking to death if you tried to pronounce—Dostoevski, it says on the cover. I bet he was never mentioned much in polite society, and if he ever got pinched, they must have called him "John Doe."

Starting in, it wasn't so bad—it was like strolling through a graveyard on Christmas Eve—but as you went on, it gave you the willies something fierce. To listen to that man, you'd think there wasn't any such thing as sunshine and green fields and laughing children and happy mothers. It just seemed to me as if he'd see a boil on the neck and go on describing it until he made even himself believe he was writing all about the man and his life. Believe me, I never had so much fun since the time I fell through the ice and come up three times.

Of course I didn't say much to the girlie about it, knowing her intentions were as good as all intentions. Besides, she says it was philosophy, though between you and me, I always thought that this philosophy stuff meant just trying not to be miserable when you felt you had a reason to be. Sort of like walking through the snow when your shoes leak and kidding yourself about it being as healthy as a nice warm foot bath.

Honest, you'd think Dorothea would read something to give her a laugh now and then, seeing that she's got troubles of her own, but the only time I ever notices her smiling is when that party in No. 711 sidles around. He's hand-

some, if you says it quick, and has rings around his eyes like men has when they're living like a race track. He doesn't look good to me, and he sends in so many calls for ice water sometimes that you'd think he had a pet polar bear in his room. They say he's some kind of a foreign count—you know the kind our best families collect—and he's more polite than our head waiter is when you reserve a table for six. Personally, I'd rather have a man ugly, a little rough and awkward, faithful, kind—and nice in spite of it. I hints something like this to Dorothea, but she flares up right away.

"He's a gentleman," she says, "and just taking a friendly interest in me. Anyhow, he told me he was old enough to be my father."

"Sure, he's old enough to be your father," I comes back, "but is he good enough?"

And would you believe it, Mabel, she didn't speak to me the rest of the day? She was even snippy to the young fellow who is always dropping in to see her and tell her how much he thinks of her father, I guess. Listen, dearie! Never knock any man to a sweet young thing—she'll think you're jealous and trying to win him for yourself. And praising him too much ain't very wise either, for then she'll be looking on his coat for a hair to see if it matches yours. Figuring out what a woman will do is about as easy as listening to your rich uncle tell that story of how he made his first dollar.

Yours, GOLDIE.

DEAR MABEL: Haven't been feeling well since my last. That new chef even insists on handing fancy eats to the help, and you know I wasn't raised with a palate like a peacock. Honest, girlie, that man can take a decent Irish potato, and by the time it gets to you, it's so colored and frilled up that it looks like some work of art and tastes

about as good. You'd think that a baked potato could get by him unharmed, but not so. The other day I got one, and he'd put something in it that changed its whole nature. It's the same with eggs and meats and all sorts of vegetables—he makes everything taste like it's something else. Guess he's thrown out the salt and pepper and is sprinkling things with sachet powder. Well, I didn't know what was the matter with me until last evening, when I stopped to look in a delicatessen window, and when I comes out, I got a nickel's worth of every kind of meat they has in the place and a full-grown dill pickle. Talk about art! The warts on that pickle looked better to me than a month's board at Delmonico's. About the only art what'll ever mix up in my meals hereafter will be animal crackers, and I'm going to get my food from the kitchen plain, if I have to eat it raw.

The funny part is that most of the guests here seem to think it the real thing, and pay all kinds of fancy prices for it. Not that they knows any more about what they're eating than I does, 'cause a fussy old dame the other day orders three kinds of soup, all innocent, and when it comes, she pretends not to be surprised and eats all three plates. So far as the names go, you're just as likely to get disguised chow-chow as cauliflower all dressed up for a party. The only one who knows what's what is the chef, and he tells the waiters, and they have to take his word for it. I'll bet a lot of folks who make believe that it's the only kind of nourishment they ever had will be sneaking back to the cook when they gets home and begging for some good old ham and eggs. And say what you want, Mabel, ham and eggs ain't never killed anybody yet. All these fancy dishes haven't been responsible for any presidents that I know of, and the kind of food his mother cooked for Abraham Lincoln oughta be good enough for any one.

I was telling Dorothea about it, but she ups and says I'm all wrong. My, but she's the contrary little thing, though, and seems to contradict me every time I open my mouth. However, I don't argue with her any, and that keeps her from crying. She's certainly up against it—her father being paralyzed—and she's hoping that she will sell some invention of his that young fellow is helping her with, and then everything will be all right. I hope it does, for she ain't no more fit to work—being so delicate and softlike—than I am to curl up on a couch all day, eating chocolates and reading novels. Work has saved more lives than all the doctors put together, but you got to start early and keep it up right along. Not working is responsible for more things than death—some of 'em being a blamed sight worse. You know you can't make a butterfly understudy for an eagle, and this poor girlie was made what she is by being kept indoors with nothing to do but study and read. What she needs is plenty of fresh air, and, thank goodness, that's something the poor can get for nothing.

Probably she hasn't got much time for that, though, 'cause she tells me that when she's through here, she runs right home to the father—"daddy," she calls him—and fixes something for him to eat. Afterward she reads to him and cheers him up about his invention, and then she's so tired she goes to bed. By the way, that count in No. 711 is still pussy-footing around her, and I don't like that. He doesn't seem to have any social connections, as they calls it, or know any one, for the only place he ever phones is 'way up in the Bronx somewhere. From the little bill he owes, I think the only thing he has to count is his name.

Guess I'm feeling real sassy this eve on account of that delicatessen fodder. George came around just in time to get a sandwich. He needed it, too, for he

was all broke up and hadn't had any supper, 'cause he fell down on them civil-service examinations I was telling you about. He said he stayed in so long nights studying for it that he forgot all the names of the movie stars. Well, after learning all about what he thought letter carriers oughta know, he goes down to be examined, and they starts asking him questions about the Panama Canal, how to raise mushrooms, the Constitution, the capital of Borneo, all the presidents' first names, the longest river, how far it is to the Milky Way, the new tariff law, how many peas in a pod, who discovered Chicago, what the governor of North Carolina said to the governor of South Carolina, why most millionaires come from Pittsburgh, who invented the fireless cooker, the distance from Pensacola to Baireuth, why it rains during the world's series, and a lot of other little things like that. George says if he was a letter carrier, he'd quit the job and rent himself out as a board of education. About the only thing they didn't ask him was whether he could read and write.

Yours, GOLDIE.

DEAR MABEL: The duchess has arrived, and I've been so busy I couldn't talk to myself. Everybody what doesn't know her seems to be sitting right down to the phone and inviting her around to the house for dinner, and I bet the poor woman hasn't the time to do up her own hair right. Anyways, it looks like it when she comes down in the morning. Honest, girlie, I think only a duchess can afford to dress the way she does. If you or me did it, the servants would send us around to the back door. She wears the same suit every day, and at night doesn't wear much more than her title. You'd never think that she passed the butter to a king and waited to see if he'd take the last slice of bacon. Why, the first day, when all them reporters and photographers was

here, they thought the head clerk was kidding 'em when he whispers, "Here she comes!" She's right smart, anyhow, for when they asks her how her mistress is, she says, "Yes, sir," and, "No, sir," and tells 'em the duchess has got a headache, and never smiles once. When they wakes up, it's too late.

After all, she's probably setting a good example to a lot of folks—even if she is a little untidy—"cause if you'd see some of the parties what call on her, you'd have sore eyes for a week. Most of 'em have on so many clothes you'd think trunks wasn't made to hold anything and they was going to stay for a week. And colors! Say, they're so loud you couldn't accompany them on a piano. She must be having a laugh out of it all right. And there's one thing I like her for—that chef gets up some new dish for her lunch yesterday and names it after her. Pretty soon she sends it down and says tea and marmalade is good enough for hers, and he has a fit and calls her a parvenu or something, and you know that ain't any name to call a duchess. Mebbe I'm sorry some one has set him back and mebbe not!

Now I comes to think of it, we don't see much of the count since her arrival—except for his side-stepping around Dorothea now and then—and it looks like he can't stand competition. He seems to be spending most of his time away from the bar, and I guess he must be sick. I've paged him now several times, when a call has come from the Bronx, but he's been out. The party calling him was a woman, and the last time she appeared to think I wasn't any descendant of George Washington's. As for Dorothea, she seems to think his nibs is as nice and kind as he don't look, and I know I put her on the wire yesterday with some one who had a twin voice to the count's. Anyhow, I hope she's not pulling any secret stuff with that bird, for mixing up with him

is about as safe for her as jumping off of Brooklyn Bridge. It would be far better if she'd pay some attention to that nice lad who's trying to be something more than a friend of her father's, only I don't dare tell her, seeing she's as touchy as a prima donna has a right to be.

Heard from Imogene to-day. You know her aunt took sick the other day, and she had to beat it back to the country. My, but two weeks in the city has changed the little hick. She writes that just the one day she's been there has already given her the blues, and the crickets singing at night make her miserable. Any sensible girl, Mabel, would change the song of the subway for the cricket stuff any day, but nobody ever slandered Imogene by saying she had sense. To read her letter, you'd believe she was exiled in Siberia, instead of being in a nice, comfortable home and sleeping in a real bed. Self-pity always keeps you from seeing how well off you are. What she needs is a good, healthy slap on a spot not very near her wrist. Yours, GOLDIE.

DEAR MABEL: Went to a new kind of movie last night with the school-teacher in the front room, and it certainly was interesting. Looking at the pictures, any one would believe they was up in the arctic regions throwing snowballs at the north pole. There was a bunch of them Eskimo eating blubber and kitchen soap and a whole lot of things that wasn't nailed down, and looking as if they liked it and wanted more. Being used to a thing makes all the difference—the poor things would probably turn up their snub noses at corn beef and cabbage, just as some other poor things do right here in the hotel. At that, them little folks up there would have some excuse—never having tasted it—but some of the guests here are simply trying to make themselves forget how it ever

tasted, since they forced an entrance into society.

Also, there was walruses and seals and polar bears, only they didn't look as fierce as they does on the circus posters. Most of 'em were that tame they didn't seem to know what a dangerous animal a man is. They would go around minding their own business and their young, until some one would start shooting 'em, and then they'd run away if they could. Why, the men in the pictures even killed a mother bear, and then roped the poor little cub what was nosing all around her dead body and put it in a cage on the ship. That rather spoiled the rest for me, 'cause it seemed so useless. I imagine if animals could talk, some parties' ears would burn. All in all, it was educational in more ways than one, and some change from the regular movies where the heroes is so perfect they fairly make you ache.

Well, it made me forget my little troubles and stop worrying about Dorothea. She's been telling me lately that the thing her father invented is almost sold, and all through that young chap who comes to see her right along. I was so pleased to hear it that I sat around daydreaming about her telling her job good-by and going off and marrying the lad who helped bring it about—a sort of romance made to order and guaranteed to please. I suppose one should never count their chickens if they want to stay friends with their neighbors, for to-day I spots her whispering with that count. She was all flushed and excited, and I sees her pass him some papers. He puts 'em in his pocket, after a suspicious look at me, and then whispers some more and beats it.

"Say, dearie," I says, gentlelike, after he goes, "I don't want to butt in, but I wouldn't be handing that bird anything more valuable than a glass of ice water if I was you."

I wish you'd seen her, Mabel. She turns on me with her eyes snapping and her face whiter than it usually is.

"You're presumptuous," she says in a sharp little voice, "and ill bred, or you wouldn't be watching others and interfering in their business."

"Don't mind me, Dorothea," I remarks even more gentle. "Only you'll learn some day I'm your friend, and when you comes to me, I won't even say I told you so."

That sort of touches her a little, and I could see she was pretty near crying.

"I'm sorry," she replies, her lips trembling. "But you don't understand the business I have in hand like I do—you couldn't possibly."

"I knows I'm thick," I comes back, kind of miffed, "and so is a good blanket, but that doesn't keep it from being safe and sure."

Mebbe I would have said some more, only her husky pink-faced friend comes along just then to take her home. He has a good deal to say to her as they walk out, but she's acting indifferent-like, not paying any attention and pretending to have her mind on bigger things.

Having your head in the clouds doesn't do much harm, Mabel. It's coming down to earth that hurts.

Yours, GOLDIE.

DEAR MABEL: Guess you think I want to be mentioned in your will—writing another letter so soon. Well, I just have to talk to some one, and what are friends for unless it's to listen to your tales of woe? The best friend you've got is always the one who is the best listener—that's why so many girls marry simps who can't talk any. They know their hubbies won't never interrupt unless it's to yawn.

Anyways, girlie, all my troubles is somebody else's, as usual, and the count and Dorothea and the young chap I've been telling you about is all mixed up

in it. You remember about my suspicions of his noble nibs in No. 711, and that he was sashaying around the little girl more than was good for her. Of course it was only a hunch, but something happens this morning, soon after I comes on, that makes me think there's something wrong with the count besides his shifty eyes. It's about nine o'clock when a call comes for him, and I recognizes the voice right away. It's that woman what is always phoning from the Bronx. I tells her that he is out and has left word that he won't be back till late in the day, and then she gets peeved and acts as if she knows he's around and getting me to stall for him.

"Young lady," she says, all flustered, before she hangs up, "you leave word for him that he'd better come out to the Southern Boulevard this evening or that some one will come down to see him. Better write it down, so there's no mistake."

"Very well, madam," I says innocent-like, and all the time thinking quick. "I will leave the message in his box."

I was pretty sure that a woman has to be at least a mother-in-law to hand it to a man that way, so when she rings off, my curiosity gets the best of me and I locates the call. It's in the Bronx all right, and comes from an apartment house on One Hundred and Eighty-first Street. Well, that was only the first chapter, as them story writers say, and the second comes along about noon, when a messenger boy creeps in and hands Dorothea a note. She reads it carefullike and then takes a long package out of her hand bag and gives it to the boy. I wouldn't have paid so much attention to it, only he doesn't go out right away, but makes for the desk. In about five minutes, he hikes past with a grip and an umbrella with a curious ivory handle.

I knew that all right, so I turns to Dorothea.

"It looks as if the count's moving, dearie."

"What do you mean?" she asks, some startled.

"Why, that boy who brought you a message just now went out with his majesty's bag and umbrella."

"Indeed?" she says, trying to appear indifferent, but I could see right away she was plumb worried.

Who breezes in at that minute but the young man she calls Harry. He's pinker than ever, and his blue eyes is all flashing with excitement, as he makes for her. She sees him coming and then looks away, but he keeps right on coming. You can tell by his face he's very proud of something he's done and some anxious to tell her.

"Dorothea," he says all out of breath, as he reached her little desk, "everyting is all right—I've put the deal through."

"Is that so?" she lisps, a little cold. "However, I don't think I'll accept it. Another friend is going to sell it for a much larger sum."

"Why, er—I don't understand," he says, puzzled. Then he lowers his voice, which had begun to grow loud, and bends over her.

Whatever the talk is after that, he doesn't seem to get much satisfaction out of it, and when he leaves, he looks as if he'd lost his last friend.

Believe me, Mabel, I was certainly sorry for that lad, because he's on the level and thinks more of her than she does of herself, and that's going some. Just to see him look at her would tell you where he stands, and the chances are she wouldn't be so snippy with him now if it wasn't for that count making up to her. It wouldn't surprise me any if he has been saying soft things to her and talking about all them castles he ain't got. Next to the party what gives you brotherly advice, the one who offers to treat you like a father is the worst. I knows, girlie, 'cause I've es-

caped being adopted several times. Always told 'em I was so used to being an orphan that any sudden change would be bad for my health. I'm afraid Dorothea hasn't had my disadvantages of education and still thinks that manners means more than manhood.

I must have been sitting there an hour trying to figure things out and telling several thousand people that the duchess is in Newport, when our old friend the major blows in. He's been to some hot springs, taking all sorts of treatment, and he says he's been cooked and parboiled so much he wouldn't dare go near them Fiji Islands. It was interesting at first, but he spoke as if he was first cousin to so many microbes and germs that I began to get nervous. Honest, Mabel, if you'd listen to him a few minutes, you'd rather drink a bucket of stale arsenic than a glass of milk what has been exposed five minutes. It's a wonder to me, considering how dangerous it is, that them army balloons and aeroplanes don't drop bottles of milk on the enemy instead of bombs.

You know kidding with the major made me forget all about Dorothea for a time, so when I turns around, after he leaves, I was surprised to see her crying.

"Why, dearie," I asks, "what's the matter?"

She didn't answer for some time, and when she does, I couldn't make it out. After a while, I gets it that she's worried about that count not showing up. And then it all comes out. Her father has invented some sort of explosive shell, and several concerns are after it, 'cause he won't sell it to no foreign country. In some way, the count finds it out and talks her into giving him the plans, 'cause he says he can get her much more for 'em than her friend Harry has been offered. That was what she gave the messenger boy, and the count had promised her faithfully to

bring her a check at four o'clock and get her receipt, and it was going on six by then.

"Would it be easy for any one to copy them plans?" I asks.

"Yes," she whispers.

I didn't wait for no more, but got in touch with the room clerk. Sure enough, his nibs had settled the bill for No. 711 and left. Then I inquires if the message I wrote was still in his box, but it's gone and that gives me some hope.

"Where's your young friend?" I asks.

"You mean Harry—er—Mr. Spencer?"

"The very party," I comes back sarcastic.

"At his place of business, I presume. I don't know whether he'll call for me as usual this evening."

"We'll get him on the wire," I says, calling up the office where he works.

Well, I must have said about three words to that young man when he had his hat on and started our way.

By the time he arrives, I'm ready to stop for the day, and I leads him and Dorothea out through the side way. No one says a word for some time, and it's not until we reaches Madison Square and sit down on a bench that any one talks. Then I lays the whole thing before that Harry boy. He's got sand all right, for he never batted an eye while I tells the story. Then I gives him the address in the Bronx. It's only a chance, but worth going after. He starts up right away, and it's all I can do to induce him to take a plain-clothes man along with him.

After that, I has my hands full, getting Dorothea to the little flat where she lives. Finally she controls her feelings so she won't upset her father. Take it from me, I'm going to have a hard time sleeping to-night, girlie. Anxiety is worse than the hives.

Yours, GOLDIE.

DEAR MABEL: I know the strain must be something terrible on you as it was on me, for a woman's curiosity is an awful curse. I was getting up in my sleep all night, and once I found myself dressing, and it only three a. m. Finally daylight comes along, and I makes a bee line for the breakfast table, before the cook has put fresh water in the coffee from the night before. I was simply wasting time, 'cause I couldn't eat anything, anyhow.

Well, I two-steps out and starts for the big hole, getting my morning newspaper on the way. Would you believe it, girlie, the first thing strikes my eye on the front page is:

SPY ARRESTED WITH AMERICAN INVENTOR'S PLANS.

Headquarters Men Capture "Count" in Furnished Flat in Bronx.

And there was the whole story about Harry and the police arriving there just as he was making off with his wife. The secret-service men had been trying to locate him for weeks, but the local police had put it over on them, the paper says.

Believe me, I was some tickled when I arrives at my little switchboard. Dorothea isn't there, though, and it's eleven o'clock before she comes in. She looked some frightened, but there was a glad light in her eyes, and when she sees me, they kind of fills up.

"Dear Goldie!" she says softly.

"Dear Goldie!" And then she starts crying.

I thought it was best to leave her alone and collect herself, and it wasn't until the Harry boy blew in that I paid any attention. He didn't appear to see me, and I didn't blame him. He had only eyes for her.

She pretends all at once to be busy with a letter as he bends over her and starts to talk real earnest, like his heart is in what he's saying. I guess she was making all sorts of mistakes in that important letter, for she pulls it out impatiently and puts another sheet in.

"Will you?" I can hear him saying in a husky voice. "Will you?" But she keeps right on typewriting.

Then suddenly her fingers stop, and she lowers her head and starts to cry. Well, the boy looks all broke up and starts to turn away. Suddenly his face lighted up, because his eye seemed to catch something on the letter she was writing, and the next minute he had her in his arms.

"Come on home, dear," he says, all choking. "Everything's all right now."

I sit there just thinking for a long time, Mabel, and then I notices the sheet of paper in the machine. Here is what it says:

mr? HARRY sPencer
Dear siR;

Your kind propisition is acceptxd and I hope that our partn ership will be long and happy.

Your s trully
DOTHÉ A



"HE THAT IS WITHOUT SIN"

INTRODUCTORY

WHEN Lea married Dorian Vandela, she left the shabby little flat she had shared with her friend Jeanne, and the petty economies of a self-supporting woman's life, for all the luxuries that surround a rich man's wife. She thought herself the happiest girl in the world, for she was really in love with her handsome young husband, and his adoration of her amounted almost to worship. Even so, there was a little pang in her heart at the thought of Jock Hervey, the old friend and comrade of her lean years.

Jock had been too much of a man to ask her to share his poverty, but on the very night of her engagement he had come bursting in to tell her of his success in securing a large engineering contract and to beg her to wait for him to come back and claim her for his wife. She could not quite forget the look in his face when he had heard her news.

Absorbed in her bliss, she almost forgot her friend Jeanne, and when she heard that the struggle had been too much for the little typist and that she had taken "the easiest way," the petted, protected young wife had only the usual self-righteous condemnation to bestow.

This disillusionment, however, was nothing compared to the more terrible one that came upon her one evening when her husband returned home very late in a disgusting state of intoxication, and she learned that he had inherited the tendency from his father and his grandfather. In her horror and loathing, she decided that she would play no part in passing on the dreadful heritage, and in spite of Dorian's pleadings, she refused to bear him a child.

There was nothing of the brute about Dorian—even in his moments of degradation—and he humbly acquiesced in her decision.

With the hope of a child denied her, Lea found the idle, purposeless life of a wealthy woman less and less satisfying. More from ennui than anything else, she drifted into the congregation of a new-cult preacher, Doctor Studholme Forty, who proclaimed the doctrine that happiness—the happiness of the present moment, without regard for the past or future—is the end of life.

It was under these circumstances that Jock Hervey returned, fresh from his sane outdoor life. From the first moment of their meeting, it was evident that his love for Lea was unchanged, and all her old affection for the red-haired, blue-eyed young engineer rushed back in a flood, intensified by the contrast between his clean manliness and her husband's increasing coarseness and weakness. For a time, the two made an honest struggle against temptation; but a more than ordinarily disgusting exhibition of Dorian's weakness drove Lea from him in loathing, and the seeds sown by Doctor Forty bore fruit.

The birth of a child to Lea—a sturdy boy, with red hair and straight-gazing blue eyes—had a miraculous effect upon Dorian. In his pride and joy, he determined to be worthy of the son he had so longed for, and he made arrangements to take a "cure" in the hope of conquering his weakness forever. He requested Hervey to keep an eye on his wife and baby while he was away. When he returned, a new man, the fight that he had made to be decent for his boy's sake appealed to all that was best in Lea, and she began to feel keenly the burden of her betrayal of him. She was on the verge of confession, but a glimpse of her friend Jeanne, and the life led by an outcast woman, gave her a realization of what it meant to defy society, and she knew she had not the courage to face an open break with her husband.



HE THAT IS WITHOUT SIN

By May Edginton

Author of "Happiness Ever After," "Sweet Revenge," etc.

CHAPTER XXII.

LEA and Hervey stood on the balcony of her flat, looking into the Row. Their air was quiet and casual, so that even Martin, sharp-witted as city servants are, could have suspected no intrigue.

The green palms under the shade of the striped awning made a background for Lea's white dress, and the fringe of geraniums that bordered the balcony glowed brilliantly, enticingly, scarlet. Hervey stood looking attentively, as if trying to record a mental impression, and she said, with a faint attempt at jest:

"You look as if you were taking notes."

He answered seriously: "I am. I want a whole series of pictures of you to take away with me."

"To take away with you!" Lea whitened.

"When I go. Try not to feel like that, Lea; try to prepare yourself. There are no plans made yet."

"I can't imagine it," she murmured.

Hervey was silent.

In the room behind them stood the discarded tea table. Hervey had called at half past three, had tea at four, and still he waited, and, without a word of clew, Lea knew for what he lingered. He wanted to see her son.

The sound of the baby's return was

simultaneous with the chime of five o'clock, and at the sound of the gurgles in the corridor, the man and woman on the balcony looked at each other and smiled.

"You must see him," said Lea, as if newly suggesting it.

"I may as well, now I'm here," said Hervey, with red in his cheek.

"You know your way to the nursery."

"Aren't you coming?"

She shook her head.

Sitting down, Lea put her elbows on her knees, and her face in her hands. She heard Hervey open the nursery door and say: "How d'you do, nurse? I'm sent to see my godson."

She did not hear the doorbell ring, for she was struggling with a grief that overwhelmed her. Her throat burned; her breath caught; her tears trickled through her fingers and ran down her wrists. She strove hard to subdue herself, and could not.

Martin was opening the sitting-room door to usher in a caller, and saying in the privileged, confidential manner: "I thought Mrs. Vandela was here, sir. Take a chair. She is probably with baby—" As if the visitor was one well acquainted with the family's affairs.

"Thanks, Martin," said Studholme Forty melodiously. "I see Mrs. Vandela on the balcony, and I'll go through."

Big, benign, and bland, he came, cat-footed, upon Lea in her grief, and stood looking upon her. Many women had wept before Studholme Forty, and had dried their tears in his arms; many had he comforted for the peccadillos, the stupidities and blunders, of dull, blunt husbands, who were incapable of understanding the subtleties of their wives' souls; but always had he allowed the season of sorrow to attain its height before he thought the sheaves ripe enough for a safe reaping, and as he stood looking down on the beautiful, heaving breast and bent head, he was reminding himself that he knew astonishingly little as yet about Mrs. Dorian Vandela, considering the length of their acquaintance. So, although he had all the art of comforting at his long fingers' ends, it was only his voice that touched her, charmingly managed, quick and low:

"Mrs. Vandela—I'm sorry! Shall I go away?"

Lea looked up at him from drenched eyes, thrown off her guard. She blushed deeply, and felt the heat of her cheeks, saw the tears that lay wet on her hands.

"Oh, how do you do?" she said hurriedly. "Why should you go away?"

"You're ill—upset."

If tact hindered the pursuit of Forty's policy, then tact went to the wall. Tact was so fine, so slight a thing that it might be overlooked; thus the policy—the passion of pursuit—overruled it. Making the most of the encouragement he had received, he sat down by Lea, in the chair Hervey had lately vacated.

"Don't—don't cry," he said, infusing his voice with warmth.

Lea replied candidly:

"You'll ignore my silliness, please, Doctor Forty."

Forty did not wish to ignore her silliness. It had brought him, at a leap, infinitely closer to the secret inner woman than he had been able to get all

these two years, and furnished with the means to exploration, he hated not to explore. Yet, parading his obedience to her lightest command, he bowed, smiled, and let his lightning eyes speak his thoughts for him.

"What a hot day it has been!" he said mellowly. "I expect you are tired; you want to rest. What have you been doing?"

"The usual things."

"What are the usual things?" Doctor Forty asked, and his air was abstruse.

She rushed into the enumeration with relief.

"Oh, don't you know? One gets up; dresses; sees the baby bathed, if the nurse is in a good temper; orders the household; shops; walks in the park; lunches; pays calls; receives callers; dines; sees a new play, if there's one to see."

"The activities of women!" said Forty, with a fine smile.

"Isn't that quite a full day?"

Clad once more in her armor, she presented to him a smiling front; miraculously, as women can accomplish these things, her tears were dried, her voice steady, her eyes calm. But it was not in Studholme Forty to relinquish his advantage.

"A full day, yes. A live one—"

A long while Forty paused questioningly, only to receive a little abstracted smile that baffled him. While he waited, he epigrammed a thought for future use: "Any man with any brain can read a clever woman like a book; but a simple, truthful fool defies investigation."

Left to answer himself, he proceeded wonderingly: "Does all that really gratify you?"

"What else should one want?"

"A world of things."

"Define them."

Lea said this almost at random, with her mind sidetracking, but she put

Forty at a loss. Lithe to extricate himself, however, he replied to her:

"No, Mrs. Vandela, I won't. Far be it from me. Some day, when you're quite awake, you'll know, and then you won't need any of my poor definitions, for you'll find your own, and, with a woman like you, they'll be glorious."

"Don't you think I'm awake?"

Forty, complacent, replied: "Not yet."

Lea looked at him with eyes of remote wonder, like a sadly experienced child, and sighed.

She knew him well enough to ask for little personal assurances. "Do tell me, are my eyes red? I hate servants to notice anything. Do I need to go and powder my nose? Is my complexion toning down?"

"No; and no; and yes," Forty smiled. Then he added: "You are one of the most fortunate women I know, in that you can cry beautifully."

He knew how to infuse intimacy into his manner in an innocuous way that even husbands could only resent dumbly, while women resented it not at all. He asked for her plans. Was she staying in town, or migrating to the country?

She told him, and he murmured:

"I'll have to come and see you down there one day. I must. Somehow, I can't quite see you—" Looking far into some impalpable distance, Forty appeared to be absorbed in the endeavor to track down a most elusive vision.

"Divorced from the frocks and the surroundings I've seen you in," he was murmuring, "you'll be another entity. Does your soul change? Or is it only outer husk—linen and tweed, tennis shoes and panama hats? Oh, I'll have to come and see you down there some day!"

"Do," said Lea, with the indefinite cordiality of a woman who knows full well that never on this earth will she

cajole her husband to second the invitation.

"I shall," Forty said coolly. "I'll run down one morning and find you alone. Will you give me lunch?"

"With the greatest pleasure."

Fate chose her moment, and sent Hervey back again rejoicing, with an absurd ball of a baby, giggling with glee and clad only in a small wool vest, perched perilously on his shoulder.

"Run away from nurse," Hervey was saying breathlessly, "to wish mammy good night."

A hurricane of white piqué and flannel apron hurried vociferously down the corridor, just as a man and baby gained the French windows that opened on to the balcony; and Hervey looked down at Studholme Forty, sitting beside Lea, with his air of intimacy which every man who met him found so abominable.

Studholme Forty got up, and once more the two men, facing each other, registered their ineradicable antipathy.

It was Forty who spoke, leisurely:

"Ah, Mr. Hervey, I haven't met you for a very long time. And what's all this?"

"I've been seeing my young godson bathed," Hervey explained to Lea, with a complete disregard of the man before him.

"Your godson?" said Forty suavely. "Ah, yes, quite so. A godson to be proud of, eh? How well they look together, don't they, Mrs. Vandela?"

Again the two men's eyes met, and the humor in Forty's was answered by the anger in Hervey's.

Lea sat motionless, a smile frozen on her face.

The nurse, coming up behind Hervey, received her charge and bore him away.

"Have I your chair?" Forty asked.

"Keep it," said Hervey briefly. "I'm going."

Lea put up her hand without rising.

"Must you go, Mr. Hervey? Good-by."

Forty watched them play out their tragedy, and thought how comic it was. Light had come to him completely, and his soul, which had a low taste in humor, sniggered. Also, he now thought he need apply only the first part of his epigram to his case: "Any man with any brain can read a clever woman like a book," appending: "So she is clever, after all; it's not truth, innocence, or stupidity." He wondered, too, "How long will it be before the husband sees?" but, drawing from the generous store of his experiences, decided that the husband in all probability never would see.

"Once a woman has persuaded her man to put on the rose-colored spectacles," said Forty to himself, "he never sees her clear again."

Leisurely, Forty hitched his well-creased trousers a trifle at the knees, and, sitting down again by Lea, looked at her profile. He enumerated with the keen sight of the enthusiast the pure, round curve of her cheek, the sweep of her brilliant hair, the very long lashes that fringed her eyes; and, not least, he wanted in his the little short, white hands with the pink palms and nails. For her cleverness, he valued her the more.

It was something of a disappointment, though Forty was always prepared for anything if a woman was in question, when she turned to him and, with a kind of apologetic abruptness, said:

"I shall rest a little before I dress."

Forty understood the dismissal at once. He looked at his watch, saw that the time was between five-thirty and six o'clock, and murmured, all sympathy:

"I'm afraid you won't have much time, will you? I'm sorry I've kept you so long."

"An hour," she smiled, "is ample for my restoration, thank you."

"I shall come and inquire to-morrow."

"To-morrow," she remarked, "I shall be out."

He regarded her narrowly.

"When can I see you again?"

Her unconcern, which he used to think rather slow, was a proof of piquancy. He said to himself, "She knows the game," while she hesitated.

"I believe I'm engaged for nearly a fortnight in the afternoons."

"Will you lunch with me at Claridge's the day after to-morrow?"

"I should be delighted."

"You are the kindest woman I have ever met," said Studholme Forty fervently, and, for the first time in their acquaintance, he carried the hand she extended to his lips.

At this Lea might have been a little startled, only that she never expected usualness in him.

"Good-by," Forty said, turning at the door to look back at her, to give the impression he knew so well how to convey.

She nodded; but her thoughts, had he known it, were far from him.

Forty went out, smiling.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Between Hervey and Vandela was established a very clear understanding as to the genus Studholme Forty. Smoking their cigars at the dinner table after Lea had left them for her balcony, the mention of the man occurred between them. Vandela looked out of his wise and rather sorrowful eyes at Hervey, and Hervey out of his straight, fighting ones at Vandela, and the following silence was expressive. Then Vandela said:

"I know quite a lot of decent fellows who worry themselves to death over that chap."

"I shouldn't worry," said Hervey, smiling.

Vandela agreed. "N'more should I. But he's mischievous; there's no doubt of that. A fellow who's always mucking about drawing-rooms at all hours of the day, talking to women about their emotions, needs the toe of some long-suffering husband's boot."

"Why is he allowed to come?"

Vandela's long, sensitive fingers played round the stem of his empty wineglass.

"Oh, I dunno. Men sort of feel he's not worth bothering about, even while they bother about him."

"He's collected a great following at that Fulham Road place of his, I hear."

"Yes; chiefly women who squander most of their dress allowances on him. It's rum what a fool even a sensible woman can be when her fancy is taken."

"That doesn't apply only to women."

"By Jove, no! But it's more dangerous for a woman to lose her head than for a man to lose his."

"That is so," said Hervey.

"Henry Sebastian—you know Sebastian?—won't have the fellow in his house at all. He tells me he's put his brutal hoof down at last."

"I dare say it meant a scrap."

"Oh, certainly. Sebastian didn't know whether he was on his head or his heels when I saw him a few hours after. And yet Mrs. Henry's a level-headed woman, if there are any level-headed women."

"There aren't."

"I b'lieve you're right, Hervey. Have another glass of port? No, barring my wife, I've never met a woman who at some time in her life wouldn't have risked all hell for a fling."

Hervey kept his hand steady, while he poured out his wine.

"Women are amazing," he enunciated at random.

"They are," Vandela nodded. "Some are out-and-out devils, and others are

Heaven-sent angels; and devils or angels, they're all pretty close together."

Hervey quoted:

"The colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady
Are sisters under their skins,"

and felt himself rather banal.

"M," said Vandela.

"All the same," Hervey went on, as if he were pursuing the same line of argument, "we're damned hard on women."

"We have to be," said Vandela. "A woman may never step aside and keep her place. Once that's done, she's gone. It isn't just herself to be considered, Hervey, but it's the whole race. Once condone 'carelessness,' and the race is lost."

Hervey nodded, and turned aside with:

"I suppose you're too busy to get down into the country for anything more than very short week-ends?"

"I'm far too busy till the end of the quarter; but my wife and kid are going down next week. And you?"

"Very short week-ends, too, I expect."

"After all," Vandela suggested, "women don't get a bad time, on the whole. And that reminds me, I'm having a sunken fountain put in her Dutch garden for a surprise, and, 'pon my word, I've been too busy to see if it's done. How long should a job like that take, Hervey?"

"There'd be the laying on of water from the house. Let's see—how far is the Dutch garden—" And so on, and so on, while his heart went sick at the shamefulness of deceit, the fear of exposure for the woman, and the whole-hearted trust and confidence to be faced in the other man's eyes.

He explained with meticulous care, mapping out, with a finger trail on the tablecloth, the course of the water from the house, talking of pressure and tech-

nical details of which Vandela had only the most rudimentary grasp, till he made of the little sunken fountain for Lea's Dutch garden a whole fruitful theme of talk, while they lingered at the dinner table, finishing their cigars.

"Thanks; thanks," said Vandela presently, after he had listened to it all and thought that Jock Hervey would soon become a bore if he didn't take the greatest care. "Shall we join Lea?"

They went across the corridor to gain the balcony by way of the drawing-room, and there Lea stood, looking out into the great, moonlit stretches beyond. Her dinner gown was white, and her bare arms shimmered, and pearls were around her neck. Her husband, a little in advance of Hervey, came up behind her, slipped an arm affectionately through hers, and said:

"Hullo, Kiddie Lea! Have we been an awfully long time?"

"Yes; I've been bored."

"Hervey! Hervey! She's missed us!"

"How kind of Mrs. Vandela to let us know!"

"They mostly keep these things dark, don't they, Hervey?"

"It's horribly bad for us to know, Mrs. Vandela."

"What have you two men things been talking about?"

"Aha!" cried her husband astutely.

"We shan't tell you." Hervey continued mechanically to bandy words.

"We were discussing something that doesn't matter at all," Dorian went on elaborately.

Lea caught up the clew, and followed it:

"Oh, Dorian, tell me!"

"Wait till you get down into the country, Mrs. Lea."

"Then open your eyes and shut your mouth, and see what you will find there," gabbled Hervey.

"Oh, Dorian, has it got spots or stripes?"

"What?"

"The surprise."

"Who said there's to be a surprise?"

"You will learn nothing from us, Mrs. Vandela."

"We're strong men."

"We can keep secrets."

"Oh, Dorian, tell!"

"Oh, Lea, certainly not."

Lea sat down, assuming the air of one who knows herself beaten, and, thus permitted, Hervey sat down, too. Vandela remained standing, leaning against the balustrade of the balcony, hands in pockets, a freshly lit cigar between his teeth, his eyes visibly, even in the semilight, upon his wife.

"I think you're getting thin, you know, dear. It's a good thing I'm packing you off down to the lodge next week."

Lea raised her look to his, and said:

"It'll be exile."

Vandela laughed a little, a laugh of husbandly pleasure, almost smug. And he said, reassuming that air of badinage, with, now, an undercurrent in it for the white woman in the basket chair:

"Isn't she kind to-night, Hervey? Again she confesses, in the most brazen manner, that she'll miss me."

After an answering glance at him, Lea looked briefly at Hervey, with a smile on her lips, and in her eyes a light that he did not fail to see before her curling lashes extinguished it. The light shocked and scared him, while his heart beat and his blood raced to it. It reminded him that all women are not level-headed; that they are not all strong; that love is a woman's whole existence. And while Vandela obviously preened himself on that mournful remark of hers, the lover took it to himself, and placed it in his heart to kindle him to fire. He knew only too well, and had a fierce satisfaction in knowing, why Lea's Lodge would be exile. Cut off from the frequent visits,

the frequent walks and talks for which, if they would have owned it even to themselves, both lived, Lea and he would be exiled, indeed. For a moment or two, while he sat beside her on the moonlit balcony, with the heavy scent of the musk hanging about the warm air, and the husband—so placid, hands in pockets, cigar in mouth—seeming but an inconsiderable obstacle to the course of passion, Hervey could have trampled over all prudence, all counsel, all that was left to him of honor, to take the desired woman in his arms and declare:

"She is mine."

After the battle against all this was over for the moment, Hervey sat still, with a sense of physical exhaustion and yet with a sense of physical rage as at impotence, while his breath came from him heavily, while he had to master its gasping, while the semilit world swung before him in a red mist, and the scent of musk and the smell of Vandela's cigar rose like choking incense from an inferno of desire, in which he dared not look toward Lea. So still she sat beside him, so white and quiet, so placid and remote from outward tempest; and it seemed wonderful that she could be unconscious of what he was passing through. Vandela's voice was on the air like a trickle of falling water; and, as Hervey's brain cleared, and he took a grip once more on his senses, he found that he was listening, to all effect, to a story about a car.

The story was a long one. Dimly Hervey understood that it might be a good one, for Vandela punctuated it by his laughter, and Vandela was not a fool. So, when he laughed, Hervey laughed, and presently Lea said, from her remoteness, "Yes," and "No," and "Heavens!" and the tale was going very well. Its historian, anyway, was satisfied, and the balcony represented an ideal after-dinner scene, with story-

teller and audience, to all appearance, thoroughly *en rapport*.

When Vandela had finished, he sat down on the other side of his wife, and there she was once more between the two men who worshiped her, and she felt their love beating around her like wings.

She let Hervey know that she wished him to go.

It was an easy matter. He was hers that night, body and soul, malleable to every mute thought that she sent out to him, steeped in the sense of her till no other sense in him seemed alive. So, when she looked at him, dumbly pleading, she had done enough.

He rose instantly, like a slave, at her behest.

Vandela remonstrated genially.

"Look here, Hervey, you're never going now! It's hardly ten o'clock."

"I must," Hervey said. "I've work to do."

Vandela, who was in high good humor, protested:

"Oh, hang work!"

"Wish I could," Hervey said conventionally, "but as I can't, good night."

"I'll come to the door, my dear chap."

"Good night, Mrs. Vandela."

Without a motion to rise, without lifting her eyes, Lea put up her hand, and he found it deadly cold. It touched his like ice on flame, and withdrew it self quickly, as if the flame hurt it.

She sat there, while her husband went out with their guest; she heard Dorian's genial good-by, and Hervey's brief answer. She felt very old, as the young do when their first faith in everything is staggered by life, as they have begun, willy-nilly, to live it; and all her richness of vitality and the eagerness of her spirit seemed to have left her, though—while in her numb misery, she could have cried over it—she knew perfectly well that a night's rest, a bath, food, absurd comforts of the body, would bring the vitality and

the eagerness back to her, because she was too young not to be resiliant.

She thought, puzzled, and resigned as thousands of women have been before her:

"Yes, I shall get up to-morrow and begin it all over again. And hope will come back again, too—hope that, somehow, somehow, things will come right. Can they come right, and how?"

Vandela came back, to drop into his chair beside her and cover her hands with his.

"What cold hands!" and he chafed them gently. "I say," he said, humorously reproachful. "I believe Hervey thought you meant to give him a hint to go. He left very suddenly."

"I did give him a hint, Dorian."

"Why, my dear child?"

"Oh, I wanted—I wanted him to go."

"Enough said," replied Vandela, with his humorous parade of ignominious defeat.

"I was tired, Dorian."

"Poor Kiddie Lea! Perhaps he bored you a bit, too."

"Perhaps."

"He bored me, rather, in the dining room, gassing all round some silly subject. It's often struck me that men do get boresome, if they don't marry. They narrow."

"Do they?"

"A wife is a humanizing influence that every man ought to be blessed with. See what you've done for me, my darling. Let's look round and find one for Hervey."

She got up suddenly, trembling. Hervey's wife! Hervey possessed by another! She could not bear it, though she tried to face the idea presented by Dorian.

"Don't you think he'd better choose her himself?"

"I don't believe he will." She calmed again, and the surge in her breast quieted. "I've never seen Hervey look twice at any woman."

"Well, I'll leave the management to you, Dorian."

Vandela laughed heartily.

"It's woman's work."

"It's nobody's."

"Very well, if you say so, Mrs. Lea." Again he exhibited ignominious defeat.

"I think I'm going to bed, Dorian."

"Very well, dearie." He walked with her through the drawing-room to open the door. "I shan't be long."

His eyes followed her along the corridor, with a loverly hope that at the door of their room she might look back, but she did not.

Returning to the balcony, Vandela sat down and leaned his head back to look at the stars, and in his mood of ecstasy he felt very near them.

He thought: "All you little twinklers, do you know how happy a man can be?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

With her cortège of personal maid, nurse, and baby, Lea went down to her lodge one July Saturday morning. Dorian drove the car, his wife beside him, Jarvis sitting at the back with the other passengers. It was the kind of ultra-hot day on which you must make your own breeze if you want one, and Dorian drove swiftly, so that a grateful current of air rushed at them, fluttering the white chiffon veils in which Lea had swathed her head. She found it inexpressibly good to be once more down here, in a rural solitude undisturbed by any of the distractions of sophistication; where cows lay in deep green pastures, with nothing to do but ruminate all day, and big horses walked about leisurely, as if they knew the foolishness of hurry, and sheets of corn were already turning, in the warmth of a very early season, into the yellow that deepens into dark gold-brown.

It was lunch time when they reached Lea's Lodge, and the sort of simple,

plenteous meal that their housekeeper excelled in preparing was ready for them—cold roast chicken, many salads, new potatoes, fruit and cream. The dining-room windows, which ran all along one side of the room, were open to the garden, and that was a bower of beauty, with its hedges of rambler roses, its giant hollyhocks, flaming geraniums, and prim pansies, tall white lilies, borders of pinks, and multicolored Canterbury bells looking overladen with bloom. As Lea looked out, she asked, with a sigh of content:

"Why do people ever live in London?"

He said: "Dunno, Kiddie Lea. I believe I love you best here—in those simple linen things, with short skirts and a garden hat; although there's no woman who can beat you in a Bond Street rig."

After lunch, they went out into the orchard, where the baby lay asleep in his perambulator, under an apple tree.

"I should like to stay down with you for a few weeks," mused Vandela, "but I mustn't. I'll have to get back tomorrow night. I wonder if Hervey's down here? Shall we stroll along the lane and see?"

"Oh, does it matter?" she said hastily. "We don't want him."

That was truth. She did not want Hervey, though her reason was not the one that so pleased Vandela when she said it. She was afraid of Hervey, dimly, dumbly, because she loved him so; but her husband construed it otherwise, and murmured tenderly:

"What? You still prefer to be alone with me, after all this long married time! You'll make me beastly vain, Kiddie Lea."

Hervey was at his cottage, after all, for he came in about four o'clock, as if he could not keep away. By then, the tea table was set in the orchard, and Lea, in one of those short linen frocks that Vandela loved and with her

bright head hatless, was pouring out tea.

It was Vandela who first saw the newcomer and, exclaiming, "Here he is!" made her turn swiftly to see Hervey, tall, vivid, gray-flanneled, bare-headed, too, picking his way to them through the long orchard grass. She thought shiveringingly of a hunter stalking game. Yet Hervey was conscious of no more ignoble motive power than a kind of dumb desire to be near her, within call, for her protection.

He had brought a basket chair with him from the house.

"I told your man I was coming out to you, and asked for a seat. Isn't it hot? Mrs. Vandela, you know bachelor tea is never worth having."

The butler approached with another cup and saucer upon a tray.

"We were just thinking—" said Lea feebly.

"Thinking about you," Vandela added, "and wondering if we'd run along and see if you were there."

"I shall try to get down every weekend."

"So shall I," said Vandela, comfortably munching.

Lea sat with downcast eyes, thinking:

"It is so difficult! If only I knew what to do!"

Soon after she had refilled their cups, she excused herself.

"I want to speak to Honoré. You'll make yourselves happy."

Vandela looked after her white retreating figure, and Hervey's eyes took the same direction, covertly.

Vandela asked, proffering his cigarette case, when she had vanished within the house: "Dine with us tonight?" And Hervey tore himself somehow away from the lure.

"Thanks, but I—I'm dining with the vicar, here."

"Oh, good for you!" Vandela

grinned. "His eldest girl is rather jolly."

"Leaves me cold."

"They all do, old chap," said Vandela. "That's the worst of roving about—a fellow never wants to settle down."

"The worst—or the best?"

"Ah, well, it's all according to the point of view, of course."

Hervey left without seeing Lea again. As the minutes went on, and she did not emerge, he was visited by an intuition that he had driven her into hiding; so soon, soberly and thoughtfully, he took his leave, Vandela insisting on walking part of the way with him, and talking, talking all the time, with his horrible benedict air of unutterable felicity. Hervey could not get away from Vandela's all-permeating felicity until he had once more shut his library door upon himself. There he said:

"I'd better work; I'll work like hell. If she wants me to understand that I shouldn't be always hanging round, she's right. We'll neither of us stand it."

Lea and Dorian had the short remainder of that week-end to themselves.

She said good-by to him on Sunday afternoon with a big sense of relief. Complete aloneness was what she wanted, in which to think and think. In the week before he came again, she was going to array facts clearly and look at them, to arraign herself and Hervey, and mete out her decision. One thing she had received already in her reluctant mind—the sure knowledge that they two must part, and that the parting must last, at least, until time had passed to dull the hunger, still the thirst, and drug the pain.

She thought that, during the coming week, she would write to Hervey. Like a woman, she hovered over her plans indeterminately, and alternately fought her strength and her weakness. Like

a woman, she more than half wanted to compromise by drifting. Her argument was: "It will only be week-ends—and not every week-end." Like a woman's, her feet set her conscientiously in the path of sacrifice, and again she argued: "I must atone. I must do, as far as I can, what is right." She looked to the baby for inspiration, and he seemed to favor both courses; at one moment his brave eyes, his assertive chin, his whole personality, fought for Hervey, crying: "I'm his. Do you think a father can be deprived wholly of his child?"

Her mind still torn in this conflict, Lea came down to breakfast on Friday morning, and found, in addition to other correspondence, which included Dorian's daily letter, a brief epistle from Studholme Forty. He wrote:

DEAR LADY: I'm coming. I'm coming tomorrow, which will mean "to-day" when you receive this letter. I shall hope to find you in, and you promised me lunch.

Till then, au revoir. STUDHOLME FORTY.

She was a little amazed, casting her mind back for the alleged promise of lunch, which, indeed, she had forgotten, as, at Lea's Lodge, she usually forgot Studholme Forty, who, after all, was only successful as an accompanist to a life of idle pleasures. But she was not sorry—rather she was glad—that on this morning of chaos he should be coming to talk his philosophy into her perplexed ear. He had soothing properties, even while he stimulated; he seemed to have a whole pharmacopoeia of mental drugs to alleviate the little distresses of women, and his counsel was always acceptable, being: "Follow the dictates of your heart. Follow them passionately, under any circumstances, unto the end."

Lea said to the housekeeper: "I shall have a guest at lunch," and, later in the morning, met the only probable train in the little two-seater kept at the lodge for her exclusive use.

Forty, coming out of the primitive station, gray-flannelled and Homburg-hatted, was greeted by a pleasant sight—the beautiful woman in white, with a white hat tilted on her gold hair and her air of expectancy lending her a charming eagerness, seated in the little blue car in which, with her own white-gloved hands on the wheel, she was to drive him toward that tête-à-tête afternoon.

As he got in, after smiling greetings, he glanced around him and murmured: "What an absolutely perfect setting!"

Lea was conscious of a feeling of exhilaration as she started her little car; for, in spite of her longing to be alone early in the week, by Friday her unaccustomed solitude had depressed her. Also, there was about Forty, though she did not try to analyze the why and the wherefore of it, an air of repressed sympathy, of delicate inquiry, and a very mature wisdom placed completely at her service.

Forty had come down to-day to pursue his ideal sport, and, as he looked around, exclaiming on the perfection of the setting, he employed no idle words.

"I've never seen your country home, you know," he said, in a tone in which the reproach was tender, if definite.

Like many other women, Lea might have answered: "It's because my husband won't have you within shouts of the place when he's there, and he's generally there, with me," but the crudeness being foreign to her, she replied sincerely:

"I shall enjoy all the more showing it to you now."

The turning she took to arrive at the lodge brought them past the cottage in the blackberry lane, and Forty asked, as it hove in sight:

"Is that your house?"

"That? No. That's"—she had to check a flutter in her voice—"that's Mr. Hervey's week-end place."

"Really? *Really?*" said Forty, as if she had told him of something of remarkable interest, and something, moreover, that required digesting.

Lea became conscious of this, and her quick, rather scared, glance fled over his secretive face, meeting no answer. He made, merely, some smooth remarks about the week-end habit, in which she acquiesced hastily.

It was later, over lunch, that, somehow, she had the idea of being pressed upon, driven into a corner—the idea that she was at bay and must get her back against a wall and fight. Faint, yet terrible, the idea was with her, quickening her heartbeats, flushing her cheeks, and brightening her eyes. Forty's talk ran on his favorite theme, human happiness.

"My point, dearest lady, is that every one can be happy, if not alone, at least with the assistance or connivance of a second person. There are many unhappy people in the world, people who like being unhappy, and those we need not count; people who are unhappy because they have had some sort of bad experience or blow that seems to have taken from them all ability to recover from it, and what *those* people want is a firm, helping hand into some other channel or groove; people who are unhappy because they won't take human love as something of the earth earthy, and enjoy it as such, and those people require teaching; people who are unhappy because their lives are cold, and they want warming; people who are unhappy because they are poor, and don't know that the greatest delights of the body are not bought in coin; people who are unhappy because they are haunted by ghosts."

"Ghosts?"

"Ghosts—or, perhaps, secrets, dearest lady."

"And what should they do?" Lea asked.

Forty looked at her meditatively.

"About them, I do not know that one can generalize." He went on speaking in a musing way. "A secret—a guilty secret—is a terrible handicap through life, especially to a woman. Long before it is discovered—if, indeed, it ever is discovered—she is usually fit for the madhouse. A woman cannot stand a long mental strain, and her position in the world is so finely balanced that she is always watching for any turn of the scale that will tell her people have discovered what she has been hiding. Exile and outlawry—women weren't made for these hard conditions."

"But then," Lea said, drinking some water to moisten her dry lips and tongue, "what can such a woman do?"

"She had better ask the advice of any one person she knows who seems qualified to give it, don't you think? Anyway, she will have shared her secret in a safe quarter, and a secret shared is a burden halved. So again we come to our subject, happiness, which such a friend may be able to advise her how to renew."

"I wonder."

The words dropped stonily from Lea's lips.

Forty knew that his moment was approaching. So little had she learned how to guard herself that at that moment he might have struck up her poor weapon of silence, and cried: "I know! I know! And you'll have to listen to me." But finesse being his second nature, Forty waited yet, for a little more thrust-and-parry work, before the final coup was given.

He said almost carelessly:

"What the friend of such a woman could do, anyway, would be to show her that frailty is only human, and, as such, excusable. If human frailty had been frozen out of man and woman from the beginning of things, where would all the romances of the world have been—the beautiful, vivid, true

stories of love that have come down to us from the ages? Love is very lovely, dear woman, and although a woman may love unwisely, she should never regret. Fill your life with love, and you will have filled it magnificently and laid up such memories for yourself as will send you down to the grave, still young, still loving."

"Ah! But—you are referring to married love—"

"Married love! Pshaw!" Then he smiled and said lazily: "Certainly, if marriage means love, and undying love. But does it? Answer me, out of your own experience, if you dare. Does it?"

Lea trembled at the challenge.

"I speak of love unqualified," Forty added impressively.

Lea looked at him, trying rather fearfully to see behind the veil of immobility that he kept over his face. His eyes snapped and lightened, as ever, and his long fingers were drumming on the table. She sensed a power in him, a horrible knowledge, that weakened her. She felt little before him, because of his knowledge, little and weak and afraid. She longed for what he wanted her to—an end of suspense, a display of his hand, a proclamation, however rudely abrupt, of: "I know you and what you have done." He impressed her, too, as having an answer to give to the troubled questioning of her soul.

While she looked at him, and he looked back, suddenly a smile pierced the immobile mask of his face, and he said very softly:

"Lea!"

She rose hurriedly from the table.

"We could have coffee in my sitting room," she said, and led the way to the room of flowered chintz that opened onto a velvet lawn. The blinds were half drawn, and the pervading coolness was delightful. She threw herself into an easy-chair and motioned Forty to one some distance away.

"The cigarettes are over there," she said faintly, indicating a silver box.

"Thank you," Forty said easily. "I shan't smoke." His tone was the tone of a man who might say: "I shall have something far better to do." He took a chair near hers, with a disregard of her wish that had a curious triumph in it, and now it was as if he would say: "Little woman, don't defy me."

The servant came in with coffee, and when that interlude of service, welcome to Lea, was over, they were alone again.

She sat silent, stirring her coffee uselessly, but Forty had put his cup away immediately upon receiving it, and leaning his elbow on the arm of his chair and his chin in his hand, gazed at her with his inscrutable, lightning eyes. Like a bird before a snake, she sat fascinated before the evil breath of what was coming, hating him now, but fearing him so utterly, in face of the revelation of his manner, that she found nothing to say wherewith to keep back the words that, irrevocably, she knew he was close upon uttering.

"Lea," he said leisurely, by and by, his voice, melodious and deep, seeming to her to strike fatally upon the air in clean, cruel strokes, "can't you see *I know?*"

She found herself wetting her lips with her tongue, to say lightly:

"You speak in riddles."

"Not so," said Forty, brushing aside her futility with a large hand. "I am speaking at last in very plain language. You have a secret eating into the soul of you, and do you think I don't know it—I, who adore you?"

Lea uttered a few sharp, stammered words:

"How dare you c-c-come here—and—and speak to me—so—"

"Dear woman," said Forty fluently, advancing his large hand till it rested on the cold ones kneading each other in her lap, "dear woman, you need not

fear; you needn't fight; you needn't fret. Just rest; rest on me, where your secret is safe."

"My secret, as you call it"—all in a turmoil of desperate resistance, she yet strove to speak coherently—"is—is in your imagination."

Studholme Forty smiled cruelly, passionately, right into her eyes.

"You are in love with Mr. Jock Hervey. Now, that is a crude epitomizing of what, no doubt, seemed to you at the moment of daring it a beautiful episode. You dear woman, don't you think I sympathize with you in your race after life and love? Don't you think I understand? Why try still to keep me at arm's length? You're no innocent baby; you're no prunes-and-prisms prude; you're a glorious, human woman, and haven't you proved it? But you've tired of Vandela, haven't you? Well, that's human woman, too. Only, you witch, you, women like you don't have to wait long for a second lover."

"You are to stop!" Lea raved furiously.

"I shall not stop. Haven't you got any rewards for the man who is going to help you carry that secret of yours? Lea, come here."

She rose instinctively from her chair, to ward him off, as he rose from his. But Forty was half angry with her, both for balking him and for her assumption, as he thought it, of outraged virtue. Forty's thought in that blind moment was: "What she can give to one man she can give to another," and his corrupt heart beat madly for her.

"I love you! I adore you!" he pleaded huskily. "And I know your secret. Haven't you anything for me? Something I will have this afternoon, Lea. I'll have you in my arms and feel your lips; and another day I'll have—more."

His arms closed around her, his face was against her face, his mouth trying

for hers. Roused to a frenzy of rage, she put out all her strength and wrestled with him desperately, crying under her breath:

"Let me go! You beast! You coward! Take off your hands——"

The door flung back, and Vandela appeared like a tornado in the room.

He had no words. He ran across to where his wife struggled in the other man's arms and got his hands upon Forty. Vandela was a smart amateur boxer, and no mean wrestler, and in two seconds his grip had separated Forty from Lea and set him writhing impotently back and forth, to and fro, while, within an inch of his, Vandela's face, black with lust to kill, replaced Lea's white one.

After a few seconds of feeling his power, Vandela began snarling, "Now then! Now then! Now then!" jeering and challenging and insulting, while fruitless effort against ruthless science was turning Forty sick and faint; while his body became, at every moment of rebellion, a maelstrom of pain. He realized, after a minute or two, locked in Vandela's hands, that his best policy was quiescence, and presently he stood quiet, tottering a little and gasping:

"If you don't let me go——"

Vandela's laugh had the ring of pure animal in it. He would have nothing of Forty's puny threats or Forty's quiescence; he wanted to hurt and to keep on making the thing writhe, while he beat it. He shifted his hold torturiously, twisting the other man, and an appalled groan trickled from Forty's lips.

Then Lea, who, on release, had staggered back against the farthest wall, there to watch and tremble, screamed faintly, with the feminine horror of rough male battle.

Piercing through the buzz in Vandela's ears came that faint cry to him, and made its ineffable appeal. For those savage minutes he had forgotten her, not realized her presence or con-

sidered her sensitiveness. Sanity returned to his face, leaving it merely immovably dogged, implacably enraged. He did not loose Forty, or look at Lea, but he began to push his man from the room, and somehow, sparing a hand for one brief moment, slammed the door shut after them. Through the hall sounded the horrid noises of a mad scuffling, oaths, loud breaths that endeavored not to be groans, blows of a whip or stick, and the running feet and respectful remonstrances of the butler.

Lea fell into her chair and wept.

She wept till she could not hear the devil's muddle outside the door that shut her into safety; wept till her tears soaked through the sleeves that covered her arms on which she had laid her face, and her brain felt nothing but a fiery chaos.

At last Vandela came back.

There had been whisperings between him and the butler in the hall before he returned to his wife:

"Just brush me down. This hand's damned bloody. I s'pose my face is all right?"

And, "Yes, sir, yes. Your face is all right. Here's my wife with a sponge, sir. Do you wish me to see the gentleman—that person—away, sir? He could wash quietly in the scullery. No, sir, he's not gone far down the lane."

Vandela ordained: "Let him wash at the horse trough down by the station if he wants to wash. And here—this matter is strictly private."

Then he walked in once more upon his wife, very anxious and even inclined to be ashamed.

He was shocked to see her paroxysm of weeping; no ordinary tears, no gentle distress, but a storm that shook her, that destroyed her voice that would have spoken, poured from her eyes, and made her heart beat so that he could see its throbbing under her white blouse.

"My darling, don't cry, don't cry!"

he begged, and, putting his arms about her, he drew her against his breast. "Wipe it all out. It's over. Just one of those nasty experiences that a pretty woman comes up against sometimes. Let's forget it. I'm here. We'll have a ripping week-end."

While she clung to him, still sobbing, her mind was working at a clear presentment of this loving, trustful man who knelt beside her, still white, still fire-eyed from his wrath of protectiveness, and she was impelled to falter:

"Oh, you—you're generous, Dorian!"

"Generous!" he said, with scorn. "Generous! You dear girl, don't think of it like that—"

"Some men might think—"

"No man would think anything of you but what was lovely. You can't help it, little Lea—can't disguise yourself, sweetheart. You've got 'saint' in gold letters on your forehead. Don't you think I *know* you, and I'd trust you

to the ends of the earth and beyond with all that I care for and all that I honor? Can't you feel that the mother of my son is set in too high a place ever to step down?"

"Dorian——"

"You're not to talk of what's happened; you're not to think about it any more. Just rest on me. That—that swine had no right down here, whether you asked him or whether you didn't; and I'm not going to inquire whether you did or you didn't, so don't begin to tell me. *You* to justify yourself to *me!* Oh, kiddie, don't! It regularly hurts! I—I happened to turn up; and you'll forgive the scene I made, for men are savage beasts, aren't they? And—and that's all."

"Is—is that—all?"

"All, my white woman! All, little pearl. All, you angel!" He murmured on, beside himself, rocking her in his arms like a baby.

TO BE CONTINUED.



THORNS

THE difference between an optimist and a pessimist: one honeymoon.

BEFORE marriage: "She's all the world to me." After marriage: "My, but the world's a small place, after all!"

A MAN whose first wife was an actress, whose second wife had nervous prostration, and whose third wife was a suffragette, is pretty apt to advocate a safe-and-sane fourth.

CAROLYN WELLS.



AT a narrow city right angle, the dead joining of two small streets in an old quarter, stood an elderly priest. Behind him stood a carriage, whose driver had sunk into slumber before the priest's foot had touched the sidewalk. Padre Pedro had stretched his small purse around the vehicle as a holiday end to his business in the city, and had halted in this bypath of decayed splendors to muse on the warm pleasure of the morning sunshine and its mellow lighting of an ancient tenement that formed one side of the architectural cañon—long since a citadel of state affairs, now corroded into a tobacco shop at its yonder corner, and here beside him into a dusky lodging.

To the priest, the tall old houses were a picture set to music, for the big harmony of flowing human life came distilled to his ears from the near-by *ramblas*, while from before the tobacco shop, through the still air, tinkled the high voices of some little boys, disputing whether a young man inside was the bullfighter, Lirio, the most popular murderer and the handsomest man in Spain.

"It is Lirio, I tell you!"

"Let me tell you it is not! Look you at his hat!"

"He does not need the hat! It is Lirio!"

The gentle old priest abhorred bullfights, but he was not, because of this distaste, the less interested in those who performed their horrors, and he looked with keen curiosity upon the fine fellow who had now issued from the shop. He was giving no apparent heed to the little boys, and when, the padre thought resentfully, it would have been so easy to speak to them and please them, he stood quite still, great wreaths of smoke curling from his red, chiseled lips and thin, brown, outheld fingers—as clear-cut as a statue, and as motionless. There was no doubting that it was Lirio. If there was a handsomer creature anywhere, thought the priest, he was beyond Spain certainly, and beyond this world most likely.

Life and the padre were familiar friends; neither was a slave to the other. But the priest had the whip hand as a rule, because he kept a ready smile and prompt wits for such surprises as his terrifying comrade chose to bring home to him. Yet every morning he greeted life trustingly, and he now looked with no suspicion on the famous bullfighter's crossing of his vision. He was interested, and nothing more.

"Come!" he exclaimed inwardly. "As you are the fighter, why not tell them so, instead of preening in their childish wonder? It is nothing to boast of, as your posture does! My Father, shall I take down this fine young man, or shall I not meddle in so small a business?"

His eyes had lifted with this impulsive prayer, and when they fell, it was answered very strangely, for they came upon a thing directly in front of him, a thing so still and so like the sad color of the tenement that he had not noticed it before, but now it drove from his thoughts the bullfighter and the little boys and the whirring music of the big city, in one sweeping shock of pity at the sight.

It was a woman, sitting on a doorstep.

This in itself was little to the priest, for misery displays itself often enough in Spanish sunlight, and his own doorstep, at home in his little hill town of Terassa, was famous for the deposits of sin and poverty upon it. But no drugged child abandoned in a bundle, no mendicant outstripping Lazarus in sores and ruin, had ever so sunk his heart at home or thrilled it in the city.

Her sum was rags and rags and angles in common with the street, not with humanity, and, above these, a look which was all that the horrified priest could call her face as his dazed mind sought about for a word. He could not see the face itself, so completely covered were its lines with dirt, from which her enormous eyes shone out like puddles from drying mud. She did not even seem to be looking at him. The great eyes were directed toward him, and his pitiful blue ones gazed straight into them; but what fierce book of sorrow his presence formed, and what she was reading printed on his face, were matters not of the step she sat upon, or of the street it led from, or of the whole bright yellow city of Barcelona.

They were things that her tortured soul would have found as readily at sea, or in a circus or a charnel house. With a shiver worse than her taut-skinned bones had given him, he knew that to those eyes God did not matter. They stared upon a wealth of something imagined, and this was the only wealth in or about her. She did not even have a wealth of rags. There were enough to cover her, but they covered her tightly, except her filthy skirt, which ballooned enough to ridicule her thinness. And her one other plenitude—a long, heavy twist of shining, coal-black hair—dangled ironically down amid her suggestion of sharp bones, and was tied tight and robbed of all sense of luxuriance by an economical piece of dirty string.

She seemed as if she had never once been clean—or even partly clean; and yet he pictured a delicacy beneath the grime, both in the assumed features of that horrible look, and in the hands within the gloves of dirt that lay on her planted knees. And in imagining this, the priest realized what had stabbed him worst of all, from his first instant of gaze upon the nightmare—that this battered thing, clean necessarily when God had made her, and since dragged down the list of epithets from sloven to slut and on to wench and witch and draggletail, poverty-stricken, worn, unfed, coated with untold, inexplicable trouble, homeless and obviously driven from street to street and door to door until she had sunk down stagnant with despair, was shockingly and wonderfully young. However great, between nature and such abominable disaster, the obstacles of instinct and strength and simple decency, it had taken life no more than nineteen years to do it.

From the woman, and their pitying light of heartache, the priestly eyes turned to the debonair fighter, and a gleam of impetuous contempt at his conscious grace and studied negligence.

And the figure now sauntering toward him deserved more and more the gaze of conjoined admiration and impatience that he cast upon its compelling features—the fine pallor of the olive skin, the exact precision of lips and nostrils and cheeks that would have made a woman exquisite, the straightness and slender virility of limb and body, and the beautiful suavity of their wafting gait.

This, thought the priest, was a symbolic vision. As the fighter neared the woman, the two poignant figures were as startling in their contrast as the heaven and hell of his simple faith. The physical resplendence of the young man seemed as vivid as that of an angel against the dusk of her rags; while in the light of his person, the poor mass of female degradation pictured, with her few significant, smudged lines, all that was hopelessly lost and low and wayward.

And the priest's mind, awed by the spectacle, was the more struck at realizing that in the gorgeous specimen of God's architecture no spiritual nobility sat enthroned. The fellow's handsome eyes would never have seen the gazing gutter woman had the priest's not led them to her. When they did, and he slackened his pace near by her, it was without any lessening of the graceful strut; and indignation overswept the padre as he saw him eat up her adulation, feeding his vanity on her feeding eyes.

Quite conscious that the priest would see the act, he had thrust his fingers into his waistcoat pocket, and he now tossed a coin down to the wretch, with a gesture pretty enough to grace his *punta* in a killing. It struck her lap and rolled across the cobbles.

But the woman did not clutch at it, nor did she thank him, nor fall forward on her knees to fawn upon him. The priest saw a flame leap into her cavernous eyes, and then, as if it had lit the whole bundle of rags from head to foot,

she rose as a tongue of fire leaps up from tinder, her thin person leaning toward him as if a gust of wind had bent her over. And as the priest's heart leaped with horror, she took one step forward and spat in the young man's face.

If passionate hate could kill, her eyes would have struck him dead, and his, as he breathlessly stared back at her, would so have stricken her. They blazed from a face as white as purest marble, and he stood as if turned to a statue now in earnest, waiting for breath to quicken him to revenge, helpless for the moment, in his pathetic tragedy of amazement, to spring and satisfy his lust for her punishment.

Life, sudden, raw, and primitive, was at its old tricks again, and Padre Pedro knew it. With prayer in his heart and lightning in his legs, he bounded between the petrified angel of vengeance and his trembling prey, swept her into his arms, rushed again to the corner, and leaped into the carriage with a jolt that wakened the driver and frightened him and the horse into concerted action.

"Tibidabo, man," cried the padre, "as if the devil were after you! As, indeed, he will be in one second more!" And having cast a swift glance backward at the raging matador, he sat forward on the seat, with one hand upon the shivering human refuse at his side and the other urgently at the driver's elbow, as the vehicle careened out of the maze of old streets and reeled into the Gracious Paseo.

The glittering house fronts of moss-backed tiles flashed by them in a stream of colors like a wild mist shot with sun and rainbows. As the high watchtower of Tibidabo seemed to rush down into the city toward them, the priest cried, "Buonanova!"—a suburb distantly parallel to them. They swerved toward it. They were there.

"Stop!" cried the priest. He threw

the driver a fee, and waited on the sunny sidewalk with the woman in his arms until the inquisitive man drove reluctantly away. Then he hastened with her into a low building that stood near by.

It had been with an old-fashioned sigh that he had patronized, as a repository for his country mule and cart, so modern a contrivance as a garage, but he now thanked God for its isolated district and convenience to the mountain road.

"You need not lie about me and my companion," he said to the gaping mechanics, "but you need not tell the truth, either!"

And with the woman in a heap beside him, he persuaded the startled donkey out of the garage and rattled forth from the city.

II.

They had swept beyond Tibidabo's watchtower and well into the road to the foothills before the priest, like a thief in his first moment of safety, turned to examine the doubtful prize he had snatched from the dregs of city society. Pity again surged over him at the discernible youth exuding mysteriously from this wreck of femininity. Her wrist was bumping to and fro on the wheel, bruised and beginning to show blood. Silently he reached over and lifted the pathetic thing into her lap, as if she were indeed but a bundle of inanimate articles, and this one of them that had spilled out. From the priest's intimacy with human hearts, he had supposed that the quiet action would explode the smoldering mass of rags into fiery speech. But it did not, so he spoke abruptly, seeking to kindle her and then provoke her tears to quench the flame, yet with a depth of impulsive sincerity in his words.

"How could you so, my girl? It was a ghastly act, and a ghastly sight. You risked your life to the monster you pur-

posely roused in him. If God in His provision had not sent me to the corner, that young man might have repented of your murder, but first he would certainly have committed it. To arouse such hatred, he must have bitterly wronged you. What had he done?"

The woman shivered in the sunlight. "He had done nothing," she said. "He had never seen me in his life before."

"In God's name, then," stammered the amazed priest, "why did you do it?"

The explosion came. The rags and rope of hair swirled round her as she turned upon him.

"Why did I spit at him? Do you, a priest, know nothing at all of life? Would I, the broken hack horse that you see, have defiled his damned beauty if I had not loved, loved, loved him? Why do you stare? You fool, what other reason could there be? You, a confessor, should know that such hate could come only from a torrent of worship, of raging starvation and thirst and pain and hell's own craving! Then do you still stare, and will you ask again why I spat at the famous Lirio, the idolized pet of Spain, the White Iris of the bull ring? I spat at him because I loved him, loved him, loved him!"

As he gazed at her, he found strange colors in his jewel of the gutter. He felt a queer purity in her, a quality that seemed to mean an abstinence rather than a virtue. And through her thinness and dirtiness, shone out one unsoilable beauty—that of her eyes, which were crystal clear and full of deep, confusing lights that summed to a total of dark blue instead of the black he had supposed they were. What a beautiful girl baby she must have been—thrilling, ecstatic to any mother who had in her anything to thrill, anything that would have decently watched against her dizzy fall! But these matters were swift flashes

through his mind, and his answering words stammered simply:

"Poor girl, such love as that is simple madness!"

"Do I not know that better than you?" she cried. "You happy sexless thing, how can you know that you are riding with the dead—with a soul that has left the world for her lover's sake and dug a garden on the moon for him? For let me tell you there are such things as moonflowers, and I will snatch those reins out of your hands and drive you straight to hell if you deny it!"

"Why not straight to the moon, to stop my argument—if I argued?" said the padre.

After their momentary flutter in the heat of her passion, the rags subsided into limp stillness. Lethargy absorbed her like a sponge, and long hours and a thousand hills rolled by them. Full of lengthening shadows, a great yellow stretch of plain came into view. Distantly before them rose a sharp cone of green and fertile land, like a young mountain against the white and purple Pyrenees.

"You see, I have driven you nearer the moon than hell," said the priest. "Yonder is Terassa."

The little town clustering on top of the green mound shone with old colors, as if the houses had been rich fabrics, and the windowpanes glittered like live coals in the setting sunlight.

"Love of a sane sort waits for you there, my girl. And work, and self-respect—even happiness, if you will hunt for it!"

They had reached the foot of the verdant hill, whence the highway climbed steeply upward to the town. At one side of them wide, cultivated fields of luxuriant poppies glowed red and yellow in the dying light. On the other stood a small house, and as the cart jolted to a stop before the door,

old Rosa, the padre's favorite towns-woman, ran out to greet him.

"Well, well!" she began, but her mouth dropped open at the burden he lifted from the cart and carried past her. Promptly and silently she followed them in, and, with hands on hips, stood looking from the exhausted priest to the unsightly woman.

"I had a puppy once," said Rosa grimly, "who brought things home to me very much as you do!"

"I know you will be kind to her, Rosa," said the padre, "and do everything needful. Wine—food—"

"Clothes, I suppose," said Rosa, "of two varieties—off—on, while *between* the two—"

As he stepped from the house, he glanced instinctively back at the thing he had left there, and the great crystal eyes looked up at him from the dingy heap that she formed upon the floor.

"Thanks! Thanks!" she muttered.

III.

When he had climbed to his dwelling at the far side of the town and eaten supper wearily in his kitchen, he lit the tall candles in his small living room, brought wine from the cupboard, and then, with a sweep of his arm, closed out the kitchen doorway with a pair of ancient French tapestry curtains of blue and silver. It was with an impulse to warm the room with color and to shut away, for a time, the whole adventure from his mood and thoughts. But as he turned to sink gratefully into his deep armchair, a stream of pale radiance shot from the hillside straight across his floor, and he stood with one hand on the heavy hangings, the other uplifted, with the wineglass in it.

Framed by the opposite doorway and bathed in the early moonlight that had flooded the road, motionless save for the tense rise and fall of the muscular chest upon which his arms were folded,

stood the bullfighter. He was still in his civilian's clothes of the morning, but from his erect shoulders hung an *espada*'s gaudy cape of green and gold, lined with white satin, with which he had blazoned his identity through his journey. Paler than the moonlight, his virile beauty completely sinister, he gazed silently into the priest's face with eyes that looked as if the devil had set two of his own favorite fires behind them.

"Good evening," said the padre.

The white face flushed with anger, and the threatening figure took a step into the room.

"Do not trifl with me, priest!" cried Lirio. "I have tracked you two, and though I respect religion, as a rule, I will have no black robe from an unheard-of little town come between me and the chastisement that hag deserves! So where have you hidden her? I am going to have her, and you will spare time by giving her to me now!"

"And what," asked the padre, "when you have so ignobled me that I have handed her over to you, do you intend to do with her?"

"I intend," said Lirio, promptly and between set, gleaming teeth, "to drag her by the hair from here to the city, turn her over to the civil guard, and put her in jail. It is absurd, but true—and the whole public will hunger for my story—that a nasty guttersnipe spoiled the fight to-day! So shaken was I that I gave it up, and Cocherito, from Bilbao, whom I hate as only the devil hates holy water, came in and took my place and my money and my glory. Thank God and all the saints he is bald-headed, or I would kill myself!"

"Speaking of baldness," said the padre, sitting down, "the poor woman would never withstand that kind of journey, and I would appear against you at your trial for murder. On the other hand, I am the only witness of what she did, and if you succeeded in

arresting her, though I am a priest, I fear I should lie to save her. Now, you speak as if you were some one of importance, so will you not honor me by telling me who you are?"

"You know perfectly well who I am!" cried Lirio. "And so did that wretch when she insulted me! I am Lirio, and you know it! My picture is in the papers and all the shops, and I am famous aside from my prowess in the arena, because I am the handsomest man in Spain!"

"I do not think so," said the padre.

"You do think so!" shouted Lirio. "I see you *are* a liar! How do you dare deny it? You can see my face, and, although I am a Spaniard, my skin all over is as white as milk! I will prove it to you!" And with trembling fingers he pulled back his sleeve.

"You need not trouble," said the padre. "There is milk in my pantry that I could look at for hours if I admired the color."

A childlike rage sprang into the fighter's eyes.

"You are making fun of me!" he cried. "No one ever made fun of me before!" And as he sank, quivering with pitiable confusion, onto a chair, the priest rose and stood looking sternly down at him.

"Young man," he said, "put by your injured feelings for a moment and tell me this: In your whole life of vanity and bloodshed, of the public esteem you prate of, have you not learned one manliness of heart, not had one reverential thought of women?"

"Women?" The fighter's crisp word was collective, contemptuous. "They are bottles of wine—brunettes are Amontillado, blondes are Jerez. It is the only difference. We use them and throw them away."

"I am sorry for them, and sorrier for you," said the padre.

"Sorry—for me?" cried Lirio, springing up. "Stop your nonsense,

priest, and give that creature to me! And if you and I should ever cross paths again, take care you respect me!"

"*Respect* you?" cried Padre Pedro, hurling out the words with such passion that the fighter sank breathlessly back upon his chair. "You vanity-sodden thing, with no more feeling in your honeycombed soul for a poor, degraded girl than for the bulls that you feed and thrive and grow horrible upon, do you know why that woman insulted you to-day?"

"I do not know," gasped Lirio furiously, "but I intend to find out before she is flung into jail!"

"You shall find out now!" cried the padre. "It was because, as your arrogance strutted itself hollow and naked before the eyes God gave her, they saw you for what you were, and just as I pity you from the bottom of my heart, from the inmost core of hers she utterly despised you!"

The same helpless astonishment of the morning was in Lirio's face, and he stared at the priest and around the room like a bull in its first dazed moment of noise and sunlight in the ring.

"Before you decide cruelly to punish a misguided woman," continued the priest, "consider what you are yourself. God gave you noble looks, but what have you done with them? Only reviled in them—and at the cost of unfortunates. And you are a great artist in the arena to what end? To the end of a goaded, tortured animal's life. Can you always rejoice in your agility and dexterity? As you look down the silver length of your sword for the killing into the terrible pathos of the creature's gaze—"

"And how much better are you," broke in Lirio suddenly, "with your sneers upon me and my innocent good looks? You use your smart, educated words as I do my sword, to hurt my feelings every way you can! How much better are you?"

"I do not do it for my living," said the priest, "but to save a poor woman from jail. Through your vanity, you have tasted life to-day. We are all the creatures of a good, but a terrible, God. Then give up your revenge and peaceably leave my town, or beware lest life turn one day and bait you as you have thonged and goaded bulls!"

"You shall not frighten me!" cried Lirio, trembling. "If you force me from town, I will send the police here after her. I have never feared life at all until to-day, and however much you have mortified me, I still know well enough that I am the handsomest man in Spain, and that the whole nation adores me."

"Think a little," said the padre gravely. "The public gives you a foolish adulation, but I doubt if there is a less loved man on earth. Through that thick crust of pride that you live incased in, what heart has ever reached out and made its way? Cast about in your mind and be truthful with yourself. Does *any one* love you?"

Lirio stared at him in bewildered thought.

"I imagine there is only one person on earth who does," said the padre.

"Stop knifing me!" shouted Lirio. "You have said enough! You are going to slash at me now about God or your priestly self!"

"I did not mean either one," said Padre Pedro. "I told you just now that the woman despised you, but I did not tell you what had gone before. If so terrible a passion can be sacred, hers is sacred to me, but the telling may lift your brutal threat from her. Man, it is not Spain, but that poor thing of rags and squalor, that adores you!"

As he sat, trembling and still staring at the priest, a slow-surging tide of color, whether from shame or rage or both, crept up Lirio's face.

"I have told you for her sake," said the padre quietly. "Now will you not

in sheer decency go away? And reflect as you go on that irony of life I warned you of. Of the whole crowded world, my fine fighter of bulls, that poor creature is the only one who loves you."

"She is not a poor creature!" cried a strange, ringing voice, and from behind the blue-and-silver curtains stepped a woman's figure.

Tall, imperious, exquisite in pure whiteness of face through which two spots of burning red crept up to paint the delicate cheeks, she stood like a Castilian noblewoman in a painting. Her wealth of hair was dressed high, its dark waves melting into the shadows of a great cream-colored lace mantilla that rippled over her gleaming shoulders and down the lines of her stiff old-fashioned gown of yellow satin, and was held from touching the floor by the white arms that she had flung back against the rich blue curtains, which slightly trembled behind her so that the soft candle flames picked out particular silver threads and glinted on them as if the slender hands and upthrown head were adorned with gems.

Lirio sat rigid with wonder on his chair, as Padre Pedro rose, gasping, to his feet.

By nothing unless by the big crystal eyes, whose gaze went daringly from the fighter to the priest, could the two dazed men recognize the apparition, but those eyes had printed themselves on the fighter's soul as she had glared at him that morning, and the priest had looked deeply into them as he had trundled her home in his cart.

"Yes!" she cried, her eyes fastening on the padre and her voice ringing out vibrant and clear again. "I am the filthy thing you scraped out of the street to-day! Do you remember the words you spoke to me in the cart? Love of a decent sort—work—self-respect! They have grown as radiant inside of me as these garments the old woman

hung on the outside when she had cleansed it! I shall hunt for happiness as you told me to! I intend to work in the vineyards with my hands! I intend to dig health and sanity out of the soil!"

"Good woman!" breathed the priest. But suddenly and fiercely Lirio turned to him.

"You two are devils! You have dressed her up in this finery to astonish me, and hidden her there to mortify me in her hearing!"

"He left me," flared the woman, "a mass of dirty rags at the foot of the hill! But I have come back from the dead since he left me there! I ran up here to tell him so, and I heard your voice and hid from you in his kitchen. And I am glad that I hid there, for I heard the truth as I saw the truth this morning!"

She had leaned forward and gazed straight into his face, all her white, hectic beauty as close to him as the gutter fury had been in the city street, and a new excitement that had been growing in his eyes leaped into full glitter as he turned again to the padre.

"Then, priest, if you did not do this, all your smart speech thrusts at yourself! You have tormented me with the thought that no one loved me! You exulted in taunting me that only a street drab did! So look, you priest who despised me, and *see* who loves me—as peerless a woman as I am a man!" His triumphant eyes swept to her with his pointing hand. "Remember, girl, you heard your own secrets told as loudly as mine! Well, I will let you love me all you like!"

With a cry of disgust, she stepped back against the curtains.

"*You fool!*" Her voice shook in its pure tones like the silver threads behind her. "Every word that the priest has said to you of life is as true as your sword and as sure to plunge straight home! What have *you* ever had to do with my love of you? I have loved

you for years without your bidding me! God, God, how the word 'love' sounded on your lips! Take all you ever felt, and multiply it by the stars in the sky, and it will not equal a woman's love for a man if she lets herself love as she wants to.

"Since I first saw your face, three years ago, I have gone down, down, down from a home to the gutter, from work to idleness, from beggary to filth, that I might sit in your path while I ate my heart and made poems in my head. To the tune of your thrust at the bull with the thonged sticks, I have found a set of words; to the thud of your footfalls going down the street, I have had a matching phrase. My love has been one that has suffered tortures for you; that has kept, in the face of thieves and alley rats, its virtue for you; that a myriad times over has borne your children and burned them up in its own fire because you did not know it; that has drudged and starved and given away the world to sit itself down on the cobbles and gloat on you!"

"I have sat in your way, as you saw me sitting this morning, day after day, at least a thousand times, and never before had you even looked at me! With my soul in a hellish heaven and my body in the gutter, month after month I have been sitting with my lap full of moon blossoms for you! I have named you my white iris, my fighting iris, waving in the wind, the slender green leaf for your *punta*, silvered by the moonlight and plunging at the bull, the white petals for your skin. For love of you, I would have gone and brought a flower from the moon, and been cheerfully moonstruck. That is what we are called, we poor women who go mad for bullfighters—moonstruck; and in my madness I have gone into the reaches of my soul and planted the moonflowers there for you."

"But now I am gloriously, gloriously free! When you saw me at last, and

spat down a coin at my adoring look, I saw what it was I loved—an empty vessel, with the picture of a contemptuous brute upon it. My love died then and there, and when I spat at you, my thralldom ended. For years, your name has rung in my ears as I would breathe it telling you of my love, and at last I speak it—*Lirio, Lirio, Lirio!*" Her voice rang down the syllables metallically as coins. "It means no more to me now than my own common name, Maria, for I do not love you, Lirio, any longer."

"You do! You do!" shouted Lirio furiously. "And I will prove it to you! If you have ever loved me as you say, you can never resist me if I choose to make you again! I am not quite the fool you two have taken me for, and I know that much about the life you swear by! You jade, I want you now, and I will have you! I came here to put you in jail, but there is another way to vanquish you, and I will do it!" He took a step toward her, his eyes alight, his lips trembling. "Do you think you will sing the same tune of contempt when I have got you in my arms?"

"You arena beast, be still!" thundered Padre Pedro, and he tried to push the woman toward the doorway. But, with a gasp of fright, she clung to him and slipped behind him, and with an excited laugh and one spring of his graceful figure, the fighter had marooned them beside the armchair in the farthest corner.

"What more would she have asked yesterday?" he demanded. "She has told me how she adored me, and it has made me desire to be loved like that! You woman of the moon, you shall know the man you have flouted! I can see in your face that you fear yourself already! One kiss of mine on those white lips of yours, and, priest or no priest, you would give me the soul out of your body!"

"God! God!" the padre heard her moan behind him. "God pity me! God save and pity me!"

But his own voice rose loudly over hers.

"I would not have thought it would please God," he cried, "to make me, a priest, fight a bullfighter for a woman's soul, but I will cheerfully do it! Can I trust your honor as a sportsman? If I worst you until this woman can fly the house, will you be satisfied and quit my town?"

Lirio laughed excitedly again.

"I agree!" he cried. "But be it on your head! You are a priest and an old one, but you have harassed and humiliated me, and now you insanely force me into this! I will not hurt you if I can help it, but I am going to cover that woman with kisses, across your arm if you make me, and across a broken one if it has to be! So beware!"

"Beware *you!*" cried the priest.
"Take that!"

There was a flash of bright red in the fighter's eyes, and, blinded, with a cry of astonishment and pain, he reeled back. When he opened his stinging eyes, he stood like a dazed, dying bull, blinking at colors as vivid as the arena's—the blue and glinting silver of the curtains, the flash of the woman's yellow gown as she ran to the door, the red of the great, ruddy drops dripping from his face onto his trembling hands; through which evolved the black figure of the calm old priest as he quietly set his empty wineglass on the arm of the chair and stepped to the doorway to watch the woman's flight.

Her voice, triumphant, high, hysterical, rang back to them as she sped through the moonlight:

"Free! Free! Free!"

When the padre turned again, the fighter was standing in the center of the room. His head was bent, his shoulders were drooping under the brilliant cape, the statuesque figure was trem-

bling. For the second time that day the cameo face was wet, and the priest, as he gazed at it, thought that the wine was not unmixed with water.

He put his hand on one of the drooping shoulders.

"My son," he said gently, "if you want to, you can make life your friend."

"Stop it! Stop it!" cried Lirio wildly. "You are a wicked man, and that woman is a harpy! I was the greatest figure in Spain till I saw you two this morning, and in every way possible you have abused me and disgraced me! You had no right to put that business about life into my head—you had no right to! Nor the woman her moonflowers, and what love does to people! I was perfectly happy this morning! Let me alone!"

And with shoulders still bent and his hands shaking behind him abhorrently from under his cape, he stepped through the doorway.

IV.

A full, blazing sun was yellowing the great sweep of hills and *vega*, and reddening the heavy grapes in the terraced vineyards. It was hot, back-breaking, masculine work, this gathering and pruning and carrying, but high up Terassa's hillside, in a long line of sinuous corduroyed forms, was a woman's figure. In its bright-colored cotton dress, it was delicate and graceful, yet vigorous, active as any near-by man's. Now and again she stopped her work—but this was for pleasure, not rest—to gaze, with indrawn breath, across the gorgeous valley or up at the pretty town. Under its sun tan, her face was full of soft color; behind the deep blue of the eyes lurked the light of contentment. Suddenly she stopped, for neither rest nor pleasure. A chance phrase had reached her from the vineyard chatter.

"Lirio, I tell you!"
"I do not believe it!"

"It is here, printed, in the *periodico*!"

A newspaper from the city was being passed along the line of workers. The woman sent her hands and eyes steadfastly back to their work, but a shiver of memory had gone ominously through her.

"What good is the paper when we cannot read?"

"Shall we run to the *padre*?"

"No, hand it to Maria—she can read!"

"Here, Maria, it is a tragedy of the bull ring! Read it aloud to us!"

Her sight dimmed for a moment as she stood surrounded by them, but her voice was steady as she read out the great type that heralded the fighter's downfall:

"Lirio runs from the bull. Rewelcomed by a vast crowd—Fought brilliantly and daringly up to the *muerte*—As he looked over the sword into the bull's eye—seized with panic—threw down his sword and ran from the bull—Hooted from the arena and jeered through the streets—Spain's greatest fighter, ruined, disappears."

V.

Thick smoke and thick voices rose to the low ceiling and struck against the walls. The drinks in the shop were simple wines, but the place, with its patronage, was like a bowl holding the dregs of a mixed potion. It was near the docks and alongside the coal yards, and any one hunting for humanity in the faces there would have had to peer through the stubble of untended beards as well as the heavy fumes.

"Who saw Cocherito fight to-day?"

"I did. A great fight!"

"Greater than Lirio?"

"Lirio was never a great fighter. It was his looks."

"How the coward scuttled! It is a wonder where he vanished to."

"I know where he vanished to."

All the eyes in the shop went in-

credulously to the last speaker. He was a sordid one of them who had mixed his drinks. He had drunk red, then yellow, and had now before him a murky concoction of both that looked as if he had washed out the flag of his nativity in his glass.

"Lirio went to the moon," he said.

A jeering laugh guffawed through the room, and the man next him shook him by the shoulder.

"A friend of yours, then, is he?"

The toper of mixed wines twitched his shoulder away from the grasp.

"Lirio my friend? Would I admit that to you brutes? You are the sort that howled him from the ring and chased him through the city! But I am not afraid to say I am sorry for him. I tell you, too, I happen to know what ruined Lirio."

"Hear!" shouted a coal heaver across the room, and he whispered about him, grinning: "He is crazy! He will take to his green French drink now, and tell us his visions."

The drinker leaned excitedly forward, his fist on the table.

"I have heard you say *women* did for him. You fools, it is not your wantons that take the fight out of a man—it is your chaste devils!" He waved at the shopkeeper. "Bring me my liquid moonlight! I know, for I have been loved more than all of you put together! Yes, laugh. I am not loved now—I confess it. That is why I drink this." He held the glass of pale-green liquid high as he thinned its milky color with water. "It makes me think that I am loved. Do you know what I see in this? It is moonlight, full of white flower petals. I do not ask you to drink to him, but be decent in your thoughts to Lirio."

He sprang up, his shoulders thrown back, the slim body suddenly developing through the slouched clothes a fine nobility of outline. But his posture

threatened the quivering fluid, and he sat again heavily. With his whole hand tight around the glass, he reached it unsteadily forth above the table.

"Here is my toast, all you vain fools who think yourselves so strong and sane and such judges of the bullfight! Lift up your sane, strong wines and drink with me! To the women who grow moonflowers"—he laughed, but there was a throbbing catch in the voice as it cried the words—"and to the men who gather them!"

The shivering green liquid slipped slowly between the drawing lips; the moonlit brain slipped gradually into darkness; the body incasing it slipped, inch by inch, to the floor.

A gray glimmer crept through the black windowpanes; the gray figures crept, one by one, away. The shopkeeper stooped over the unconscious derelict.

"Get up! It is morning!"

"Moonlight!" pleaded the man. "I have spent all my money in your shop! Give me some of my moonlight!"

"There is plenty of sunlight for you in the street!"

"I do not want to see the sunlight!" begged the creature miserably. "Do you think I am a bull that you are shoving into the arena? Will you stick a thong between my shoulders presently?"

The closing door struck the shoulders mercilessly, and he fell into the angle of the doorway. The sun, a ball of streaming red, had climbed above the glittering Mediterranean and was pour-

ing gold into the dirty street, and he reached his shaking hands toward it.

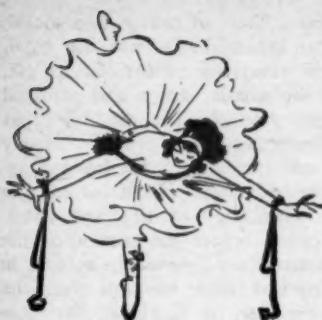
"Life! Life!" he cried, and slid down to the doorstep.

Across from the docks, in the shadow of the fortress, stood a little bank for the savings of laborers, and coming toward it among the early customers was a woman from the country. There was something of the bright sunshine in her beautiful tanned face, something of the blue sea in her contented eyes, of the fresh morning air in her swinging walk. But all these vanished from her abruptly, as if a wind had wiped them away and brought her to a halt. The abject figure and bent, staring head had shocked her with recollection, and, with her heart sickened by its own understanding of human wretchedness, she glanced hesitantly at the bank, caught her breath, and tossed her whole purse to him. It burst open against his knee, and the coins rattled over the cobbles.

As he looked up, she stood as if frozen to the sidewalk. Their eyes met, and the feeble luster in his grew to a stronger and stronger light of rage. He struggled to his feet, his purpose written hideously in his face—to spit at her.

But as he stepped toward her, he saw what was shining in hers—a great light of grief and pity and remembered love that, as she vainly strove to breathe his name, swept her arms involuntarily open to him there in the street. For a moment wonder and confusion battled in his face; then, with a faint sob, the wrecked creature stumbled into them.





Plays and Players

By

ALAN DALE

DO you think that "in your remarks about the drama you can neglect the Shakespeare tercentenary and get away with it?" writes a correspondent tenderly, yet colloquially. "Some of us still love Shakespeare, you know."

Although I scent the suspicion of a reproach in this solicitous query, my conscience is perfectly clear. I never shirk. However painful my "dooty" may seem, I do it, and even if I had wished to forget the Shakespeare tercentenary, with its fetishlike observances, my keen sense of the proprieties—and I use the word advisedly—would not have permitted it. Let me hasten to say that I have already seen Mr. James K. Hackett in "Macbeth"; Sir Herbert Tree—once merely Beerbohm—in the obsolete glory of "Henry VIII."; and Mr. Thomas A. Wise, with a couple of ladies, in the classic known as "The Merry Wives of Windsor." Having seen all these, I can honestly say that I have not neglected the tercentenary. Should there be more productions in this "line," I shall see them religiously, as I see everything. Even if Mr. Belasco decided to write a Shakespearean play, I should see it without a qualm.

You may say that this savors rather of grim resolve than of pleasure. Precisely. Just as one of the late Clyde Fitch's heroes used to contemplate a

trip to Brooklyn with a brooding sense of unrest and discomfort, so I regard the possibility of a Shakespearean evening. I feel it on my mind. I am nervous, irritable, and "not myself," as it were. I am obsessed by the horrid idea that I am doing something just because certain people tell me that it is the correct thing to do. My experience of life has been that genuine relaxation is achieved only by the incorrect thing. Duty belongs to the "copybook."

That producers of Shakespeare cater to people like me, rather than to those who rejoice in the suave fact that they are *not* like me, is very obvious. The idea to-day is to make Shakespeare as "easy" as possible. He must be disguised, just as pills are hidden in a coating of sugar for refractory little children.

Much of Shakespeare must be suppressed, and is suppressed—and little booklets explain why this is done, to avoid the charge of vandalism. Actors with "names" are secured to play the leading rôles, even if they be temperamentally unfitted for them, and lovely actresses who have starred in modern things are borrowed for the occasion. Fortunes are spent in scenery, so that the glories of the Hippodrome and the Winter Garden and the Dillingham musical comedies may lend their luster to the Bard. "Sensuous" music is added to the mix-

ture, and stirred gently into it, until it is quite smooth, like custard. An army of "supers" is necessary; and then—the press agent, with suggestive whispers of the tremendous cost of it all and the superb managerial sacrifice on the shrine of Stratford-on-Avon—where Marie Corelli lives.

We go to these Shakespearean performances, and some of us are really delighted with ourselves when we get home. It was very beautiful, we say cozily, and it was a great pleasure to bask in the sunshine of the classics. We are able to talk about it all quite intelligently at our next dinner party, and develop quite an affection for the "Elizabethan" days. In justice let me add that the "sensuous" music is *not* contributed by Mr. Irving Berlin, but as much of the text as we are permitted to perceive is really by Shakespeare. Up to the present, no manager has cut out the text entirely. A few of the speeches that are known as "household words" are preserved, and offered without adulteration.

The "average" theatergoer must be considered, and in the matter of Shakespeare, the Pecksniffian attitude of the public must not be forgotten. The manager knows that it is everybody's duty to appreciate Shakespeare, and the position of those who have been bored to extinction is detestable. They are not only angry with themselves for having been bored, but with the manager who has been shortsighted enough to bore them. If they dared, they would be angry with Shakespeare, too, but of course that would be indecent, and show a grossly "uneducated" mind.

Perhaps the most "notable" Shakespearean production we have had in years was Sir Herbert Tree's "Shakespeare Tercentenary Festival" presentation of Shakespeare-Tree's "Henry VIII." Not only was it "notable," but it was "lavish," "impressive," and many other similarly trenchant reportorial

adjectives. Tree, of course, is a sound, sane man of business—not the hard, vehement, inartistic American article, but the diplomatic, suave, and pictorial European product. He did not cross the Atlantic and just project "Henry VIII." into our midst. He labored assiduously, with due regard for all our little eccentricities of life and habit. When called before the curtain at the New Amsterdam Theater, he told us in tones choked with emotion that the prime minister of England, Mr. Asquith, had cabled his congratulations.

All "society" sat there watching—Shakespeare—Tree; and then Tree—Shakespeare. Tree's appeal was to "society." It is "society" that upholds the Metropolitan Opera House and—the Horse Show. It was "society" that should be interested in "Henry VIII." To the mob, Mr. Asquith meant nothing at all but a newspaper name paraded in the war news. To "society" he meant a man of immense influence and big social position. And he—this person of big social position—left his war cabinet and actually cabled congratulations to Sir Herbert Tree.

Of course you knew at once that this was no mere common or garden production of Shakespeare. It had "class," distinction, and prestige. The first-night audience represented millions—of dollars. Names rivaling in power that of Mr. Asquith were "among those present." But the masses were not forgotten—nor the tired people who want to see Shakespeare for entertainment or not at all.

"King Henry VIII." had many very sumptuous features, and at one time, in the banqueting hall of Cardinal Wolsey's palace, one almost felt that Mr. "Flo" Ziegfeld or Mr. "Jake" Shubert had been called in to supervise the spectacular adjuncts. Whenever Shakespeare was silent, the producers did their best work. When Henry met Ann Bullen, and danced with her in the

presence of the cardinal, we really enjoyed ourselves immensely. Not for one minute were we bored. We were as merry as if we were assisting at a sort of "Watch Your Step" affair. I shouldn't have been a bit surprised if the lovely girls of Hampton Court had tripped across a "runway" extending over the heads of the audience. Nor should I have marveled if little Miss Gaby Deslys had been borrowed for the rôle of Ann Bullen—portrayed, with some justice, as a soubrette.

It was all most captivating. There we were actually amusing ourselves, with the honored name of Shakespeare as the pretext. I have seen "Henry VIII." presented before, and have been dreadfully bored. It is a very dull play that would go the rounds of all the theatrical producers to-day without finding a market. Tree tore from it all its massively tedious episodes; refurbished it; modernized it as far as he could without offense; and—people went home refreshed and tremendously pleased with themselves.

We love to pretend that Shakespeare should be "offered" without scenery, but with curtains and placards. Not so Sir Herbert. He will prove to you, if you read his book, that Shakespeare himself believed most implicitly in scenic effects, as far as he could secure them in those ribald old days. "Henry VIII." is largely a pageant play, says Tree, and "as such it was conceived and written."

There were fine names in the cast—Lyn Harding as *Henry*, Edith Wynne Matthison as *Katharine*, Charles Dalton as the *Duke of Buckingham*, and Tree himself as the *Cardinal*. Mr. Asquith would have loved that cast. It really was a pity that he was too occupied with the war to dash over for a few days and relax Shakespeareanly. Wolsey's palace, with its splendid electric-lighted candelabra, was a joy to the eye. Of course the electric fixtures were im-

itations of candles, and were not deliberately flaunted in our midst, and if they had only flickered a bit, it would have added to the realism. As for the coronation scene in Westminster Abbey, with not one solitary Shakespearean utterance to perplex us, it was overweeningly gorgeous. All we had to do was to sit there and enjoy it, for there was no spoken word. That was a serene satisfaction.

Sirerbert—I mean Sir Herbert—himself, as an actor, is "peculiar." I think he could be deliciously humorous, if he would. However, there were fewer of his eccentricities in the rôle of Wolsey than in any other rôle I have seen him play. The long "farewell" speech was given with excellent effect. There is always the possibility that some members of any audience *might* know it by heart from the dear old school days. From the mere standpoint of acting, however, it was Lyn Harding who carried off the honors, with Edith Wynne Matthison as a close second. Nor must I forget little Miss Willette Kershaw, an American—one talks of "Americans" in New York casts to-day as if they were curiosities or antiques—whose *Ann Bullen* became a regular Billie Burke. Undoubtedly Miss Bullen was an Elizabethan Billie Burke. Henry VIII. was just the sort of jolly old boy to be captivated by that particular type.

In the "appreciation" of "Henry VIII." there was no dissenting voice. It is all very well to say, as we all love to say, that this play is not for the stage, but for the library. Possibly. To-day, however, people do not sit in their libraries and study Shakespeare. If they did, it would take each student at least a month to understand the language of "Henry VIII." At the present time, people may have tea in their libraries, or play bridge there, but they do not burn any midnight oil poring over the complexities of the immortal

Bard. They should do so, of course, so that the remark, "Shakespeare is not for the stage, but for the library," could be perfectly relevant.

I will make a very disgraceful confession, and admit that there are only three Shakespearean plays that I completely understand—to wit, "As You Like It," "The Tempest," and "The Merchant of Venice." Those plays I studied at school, word for word, phrase for phrase, with dictionaries, commentaries, concordances, and all the rest of it. To each play, we devoted six months of careful study, which were followed by examinations. I smile indulgently when I see the Tired Business Man making his first acquaintance with the Bard by means of the stage, and doing his best to laugh at the "comedy." I am immensely amused to hear the mirth called forth by the "humor" of *Touchstone*, or *Launcelot Gobbo*, simply because those rôles are usually acted by professional "funny men." One might almost go to a "language school" to fathom the meanings of Elizabethan humor. When fathomed, it is generally discovered to be unendurably coarse.

Mr. Hackett's production of "Macbeth" was another beautifully scenic undertaking, made with all due deference to the modern "attitude." Mr. Asquith wots nothing of James K. Hackett, and there was little appeal to "society." The actor was severely handled by the critics, who can always be relied upon to write amusingly on the subject of Shakespeare—especially the very young ones who "read it up." I think that Mr. Hackett himself gave a most creditable performance, and may be commended for his courage. It was, if I am not mistaken, his first appearance as *Macbeth*, and—well, one has to treat Shakespeare critically, as one treats the opera at the Metropolitan; that is to say, one fills columns with phrases that mean nothing.

The list of "among those present" at

the Hackett performances was socially impossible. Some of the audience must have held "cut-rate" tickets, which is disgusting!

As for "The Merry Wives of Windsor," it is a very severe strain upon my powers of endurance, and however it be "arranged" or "edited," its coarseness and vehemence are hard to bear. As for Falstaff, I prefer him in opera, where at least he is disguised in music. Oh, I know it is the correct thing to regard this fat knight as the very acme of light and frolicsome jocundity, but if I were able to do this, I think I should take my sense of humor and have it massaged. To the correspondent with whose remarks I began my own, I repeat that I never shirk, but it is very annoying to write on the Shakespearean topic, because one always treads on some fellow's corns. One can be laudatory and enthusiastic, and then out come the old-timers—that grisly horde of bewiskered ghouls—who tell you that you should have lived when Shakespeare was understood and acted by *actors*. You dare not argue, and however old you may really be, you feel absurdly young and irritatingly kittenish. They will unroll names with which you are of course historically familiar, and insist that nothing modern can possibly compete with them. They are not at all nice about it, but garrulous, irate, and aggressive. If you agree with them—and I've tried to do that as the easiest way out of it—they are just as hurt. The old-timers are impossible.

On the other hand, if you dislike the performances, and say so, then your good taste is put on the rack. Oh, you are able to appreciate only such things as the Winter Garden shows, or musical comedy, or plays that are spectacularly girded. You are a Goth. You lack education. The very greatest minds in the world have acknowledged Shakespeare, and has he not lived for

three hundred years? Who are you—
et cetera, et cetera.

It is most disagreeable, that idea of
being perpetually in the wrong. Why
should it be criminally inartistic to con-
fess that sometimes a performance of
Shakespeare seems to be ill-timed and
unnecessary? Why should one hesi-
tate to suggest that the Bard depends

upon certain conditions for apprecia-
tion? In most mundane affairs we are
allowed the privilege of our own opin-
ions, but not in the Shakespearean mat-
ter. In that, we must all agree, yet
still argue and chatter. I always think
that Shakespeare brings out all a man's
worst traits. It is like waving a red
flag before a bull even to mention him!



IN THE SPRING

OUT of Africa winging north in the night,
Swallow, swallow, tell us what home is thine.
What far eaves shall give thee rest from the flight?
What low rooftree, buried half in its vine?

There in the quiet years thy mother fed
Many a brood, ere the crowded fledglings flew.
Peace, O peace! till they left the drowsy bed,
And the flashing wings were out on the peaceful blue.

Over the Belgian woods and meadowlands,
Swallow, swallow, flying in with the morn,
Here no longer the church or cottage stands;
Scattered now is the wall where thou wast born.

Here where the well was, here where the cattle lowed,
Nothing familiar, nothing of old, remains.
Emptiness, and ruts in the widened road!
Barren fields, and graves by the broken lanes!

Far away is a thunder deep in the west.
Over the Rhine, over the vineyards, go!
There, untouched, are eaves for a stranger's nest;
Welcome waits—and how should a swallow know?

GEORGE STERLING.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

IN this number you have the second installment of Samuel Hopkins Adams' sparkling three-part serial. If by any misfortune you haven't been reading it, begin now. The synopsis of the opening chapters will enable you to start with this issue.

Does it strike you as a bit odd that Mr. Adams should have chosen a dry-as-dust "bug" scientist for the hero of a bubbling, sprightly romance?

Do you remember, in the opening installment, how "The Unspeakable Perk" thrills at the mention of Walter Reed and his fellow scientists, who went down to Havana and fought the mosquitoes? Polly Brewster sneered at his idea of heroism. "Scrubby peekers into the lives of helpless bugs," she called his heroes. Perk's voice hardened as he told her of the three American doctors who went down into that pesthole of a Cuban city to offer their lives for a theory.

"Not for a tangible fact like the flag, or for glory and fame as in battle," he reminds her, "but for a theory that might or might not be true. There wasn't a day or a night that their lives weren't at stake. Carroll let himself be bitten by infected mosquitoes on a final test, and grazed death by a hair's breadth. Lazear was bitten at his work and died in the agony of yellow-fever convulsions, a martyr, if ever there was one. Because of them Havana is safe and livable now. We were able to build the Panama Canal because of their work, their scrubby peeking into the lives of helpless——"

"Don't!" cried Polly. "I—I'm ashamed. I didn't know."

We wonder how many Americans do

know of the quiet, deliberate heroism of the four hundred men composing the little army of the Public Health Service, always ready for action in any part of the world, wherever epidemic disease breaks out.

Of them all, none has hazarded his life more freely in plague-infested districts than their commander in chief, Surgeon General Rupert Blue. He was the first man in the world to handle and control an outbreak of bubonic plague. The burrows of Chinatown in old San Francisco, where a score of years ago the black plague crawled unchecked, the lazarettas of Havana and of New Orleans, have all been cleaned under his direction.

Yellow fever has inflicted the heaviest losses on this noble little army since 1878, when Surgeon Waldo gave his life fighting the fever in the Mississippi Valley. Doctor after doctor in the town of Cairo had given up the fight and quit. Night and day, single-handed, Waldo labored among the dead and dying. He is buried near the scene of his heroism, like a soldier who has fallen in the trenches.

Typhoid has taken the next heaviest toll, including Past Assistant Surgeon Joseph W. Goldberger, who greatly aided science with his researches, and Assistant Surgeon W. W. Miller, who died in 1907 while experimenting with germs in the hygienic laboratory of the Marine Hospital Service in Washington.

The list is a long one. Quietly, without trumpet or drum, these men stake their lives in fever camp and in plague hospital all over the world—in the leper colony of Molokai, in fever-ridden

Guayaquil, in Callao, Guantanamo, Kobe, Libau, St. Thomas in the British West Indies, Shanghai, Bocas del Toro, or Santiago de Cuba—almost wherever an American flag floats over a consulate.

Could an author seeking a hero find more heroic men to choose from than in the ranks of this little Army of Self-Sacrifice?

IN the complete novelette for July, Randolph Bartlett relates the startling behavior of a young woman who suddenly decides to relieve her boredom by taking more interest in life. "The Escapades of Ann" is its title.

Short fiction in the same number includes "The Atonement of Captain Bowlegs," a story of charm and tender appeal by Molly Elliot Seawell; a refreshingly human story of the New Jersey coast by Bonnie R. Ginger, entitled "That Morbid Whale"; another batch of breezy letters from *Goldie*, which Albert Edward Ullman arranges into a yarn called "Cupid at the Switchboard"; "The Day of Days," one of

I. A. R. Wylie's very best; and "Hung Upon the Clothesline," the delightful tale of a slight complication in Lenox society, by William Almon Wolff.

ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE has chosen for the next of his "Stories of the Super-women" *Messalina*, who, in her twenty-six short years, probably lived more life than did Claudius' other four wives put together.

"People used to speak of her in whispers," Mr. Terhune tells us. "Her name was a synonym in the mouths of those who shied from shorter and uglier words. She was the supreme type of super-woman. And for a space she ruled the whole world. I think she will interest you."

We know she will.

NO newspaper is more discriminating in its literary reviews than *The Evening Post* of New York. The *Post*, in a recent issue, says: "One is always sure to be entertained by AINSLEE'S."





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into nourishment.
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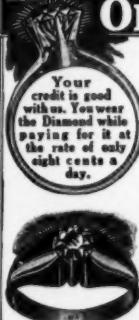
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"A positive and permanent," N. Y. Herald, July 9, 1893.

"On Obesity, Dr. Gibbs is the recognised authority," N. Y. World, July 7, 1893.

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Other systems may temporarily
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Statement of the Ownership, Management, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of AINSLEE'S, published monthly, at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1916:

State of New York, County of New York, (ss.)

Before me, Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared George C. Smith, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is one of the publishers of AINSLEE'S, and further states, under oath, that to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, and of the terms of publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business manager are: Publishers, Street & Smith, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; editor, Robert R. Whiting, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; managing editor, Street & Smith, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; business manager, Street & Smith, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

2. That the owners are: Ainslee Magazine Company, Seventh Avenue and Fifteenth Street, New York, N. Y., a corporation composed of Ormond G. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; George C. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; Cora A. Gould, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: C. C. Vernam.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, who are not on the list of stockholders and security holders, as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in case where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

GEORGE C. SMITH,

of the firm of Street & Smith, publisher.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 27th day of March, 1916, Charles W. Osterling, Notary Public, No. 29, New York County. (My commission expires March 30, 1917.)

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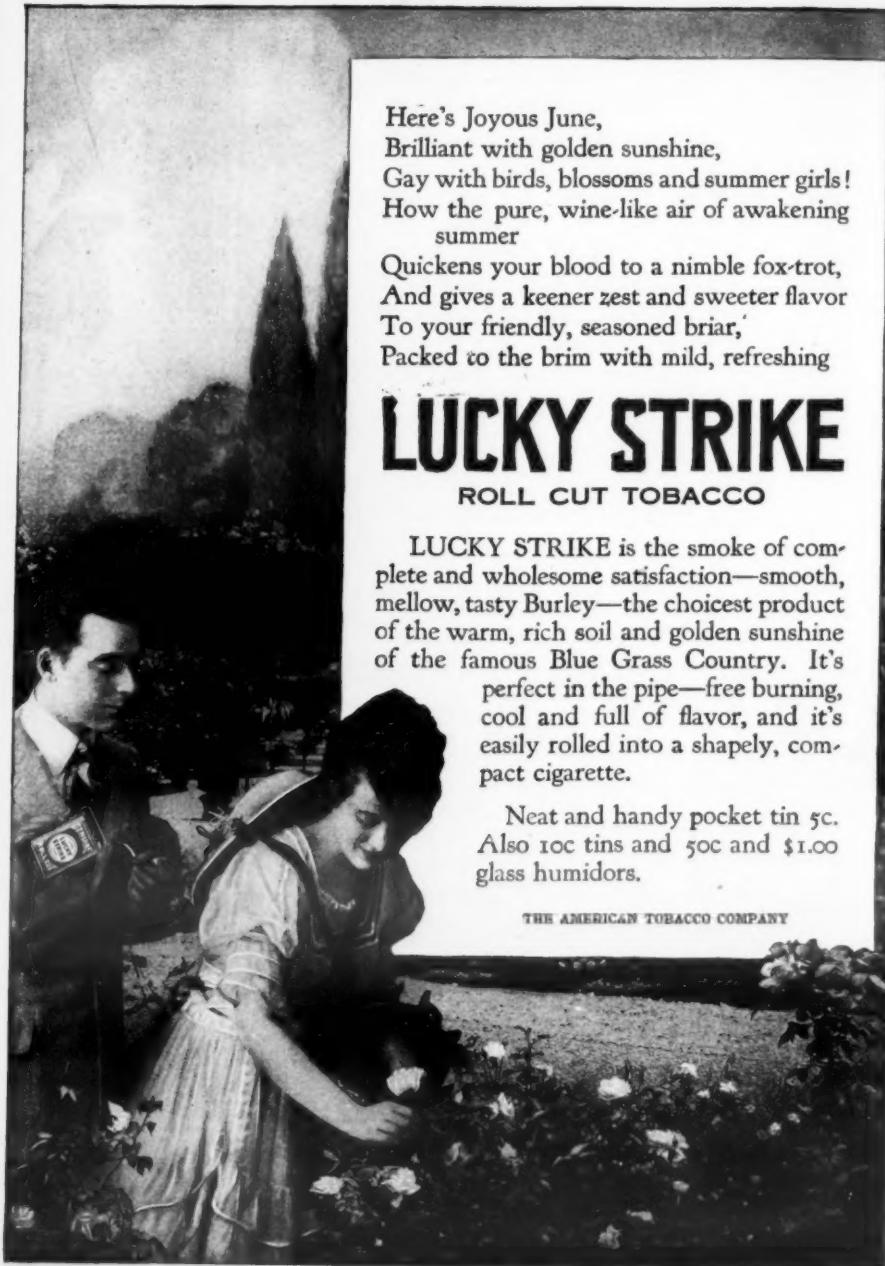
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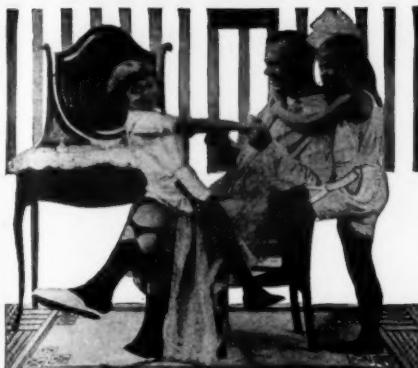
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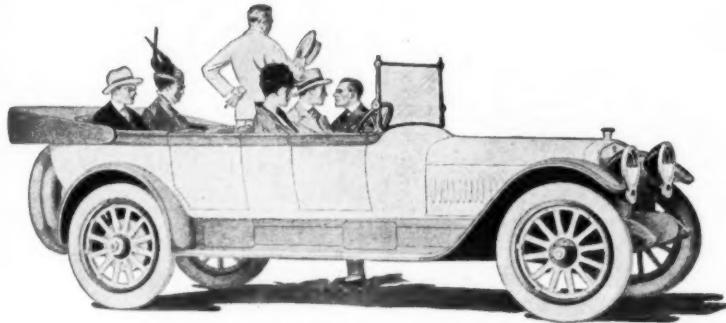
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United States Tires have that complete 'union' between rubber and fabric which absolutely prevents tread separation and disintegration under the tread.

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Come—drink a glass
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Demand the genuine by full name—
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